THE ENGLISH NOVEL IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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CHAPTER I

THE INWARD THOUGHTS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

In the chapter called "The Romantic Reaction" in Science and the Modern World, Alfred North Whitehead observes,

> It is in literature that the concrete outlook of humanity receives its expression. Accordingly, it is to literature that we must look particularly in its more concrete forms, ... if we hope to discover the inward thoughts of a generation.[1]

The Eighteenth Century's outlook was very different from our own, but its "inward thoughts" have a particular relevance for us today. The century introduced the industrialism which has shaped the West, and its political philosophy was an important influence on the American revolutionists, particularly Thomas Jefferson. But its ideas differ so vastly from ours that the form of our civilization seems to rest on thought systems we now appear to doubt. It is possible that a study of the Eighteenth Century, using its literature as original source material, will lead not only to an appreciation of the period itself, but toward a discovery of its influences on its future and our past. Knowing something of its thoughts may help us to know ourselves in the making, to illuminate some of the dark and cluttered corners of our own confusion.

The "concrete form" of literature which suggests itself as the natural material for a study of this kind is the novel. It was the artistic creation of the Eighteenth Century which quickly became the dominant literary form, as its tremendous scope and its freedom of choice in subject matter, technique, and emphasis make it the ideal instrument for treatment of the compounded complexities of a technical society.

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[1]Alfred North Whitehead, Science and the Modern World (New York, 1962), p. 73.

The novel did not evolve slowly - it simply sprang into being full-grown, like Athene from the head of Zeus. It seemed to come as an answer to a newly created need in a new artistic and economic atmosphere, and as the expression of the spirit of a new age - as the drama had been in the first Elizabeth's reign. It is not the purpose of this essay to explain why the novel appeared when, where, and as it did - if, indeed, such an explanation is possible - but perhaps a few very general remarks about its origins will serve as a useful preface to the main investigation and discussion.

The novel is interesting because it is the only art form to develop almost exclusively within the precincts of the middle class. Scholars do not agree on any concise explanation for this phenomenon, but it is probably safe to say that the new solidarity of the middle class in the period of relative calm following the upheavals of the Seventeenth Century was important. In the new atmosphere, large numbers of literate people had time to spare and the desire to be amused. They were the merchants and squires who had made money in trade and farming - thrifty, industrious, no-nonsense people. They looked about them in provincial complacency and thought little of the world beyond their own confined circles. They were not interested in aesthetics, and they were uneasy in the presence of art, but they felt a need for something to fill profitably the new spare time of their wives and daughters. What better than an entertaining story about people like themselves, in which the virtues they particularly admired - restraint, thrift, sobriety - could be used to point an instructive moral?

The early novels were mainly the work of members of this class, writing for their peers. The efforts of the best of them will bear comparison with the best of any period, yet their work was aimed exclusively at the

reader E. M. Forster detests and fears as the enemy of the literary artist, the man who says,

> What does a novel do? Why, tell a story of course, and I've no use for it if it didn't. I like a story. Very bad taste on my part, no doubt, but I like a story. You can take your art, you can take your literature, you can take your music, but give me a good story. And I like a story to be a story, mind, and my wife's the same.[2]

What this says ultimately of the novel, or of Forster as a critic, perhaps we will discover later.

As the novel appeared within the several strata of one social class, it might be hypothesized that early experiments would bear a monotonous similarity to one another. Instead, we find the new form developing with an emphasis on the importance of the story as the only common characteristic. The variety in the important early novels reflects a vigorous diversity within the one cultural setting. All are products of a similar environment, written for a similar public, but as they mirror different facets of an intricate society, they differ in approach and moral concept as well as in structure and technique.

Among these early experiments, Clarissa Harlowe and Tom Jones can be chosen as masterpieces in themselves and as exponents of the two important approaches to Eighteenth Century life, the romantic and the neo-classic, with a resulting divergence in conclusions on the nature of man - Richardson finding him essentially evil, and Fielding seeing him naturally good. As the following chapters will attempt to show, both books can tell us something important about the Eighteenth Century intellectual climate, and both interest us because of their influence on later fiction.

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[2]E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (New York, 1927), p. 45.

CHAPTER II

CLARISSA HARLOWE, THE PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEW OF MAN

Clarissa Harlowe is a product of those elements of Eighteenth Century thought and feeling which were based on ascetic Protestantism. Protestantism in England had had a stormy history after the separation of the Church of England from Rome in the Sixteenth Century, but the burnings and beheadings were now firmly in the past and what remained was the established church and a moral value standard based on the Protestant ethic.

Puritanism was entering a new phase, and Max Weber has made a valuable analysis of Protestantism and its relationship to the origins of capitalism[3] which is helpful in understanding Richardson and Clarissa. The doctrine of predestination, Weber says, had given a new interpretation to Christian theology. In Calvinistic reasoning, there was no possibility of release from sin - even Christ had died only for the elect. The most important fact of life was salvation, but man, as Weber puts it, was "forced to follow his path alone to meet a destiny which had been decreed for him from eternity."[4] Morally isolated from God, he could hope for salvation neither from faith nor works, yet he searched instinctively for some hint that he might be among the elite. Knowing that everything of the flesh separated him from God, he was led automatically to suppression of all physicality, and looked elsewhere for the necessary suggestion of proof. He found it in the fact of worldly prosperity, which he

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[3]Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (London, 1931), Chapter IV, "The Religious Foundations of Worldly Asceticism."

[4]Ibid., p. 104.

interpreted as "an outward and visible sign of an inward and (divinely approved) spiritual grace." The qualities conducive to material prosperity - industry, restraint, thrift, and sobriety - became the supreme Christian virtues, and rational pursuit of profit seemed ordained of God. John Wesley advanced the logic one step further with his theory that a life systematically planned around good works could serve as the basis for rational proof of salvation. Thus Methodism completed the transfer of asceticism from the monastic cell to the marketplace.

Richardson's book describes the merchant class whose world views were rooted in its religious convictions, and whose spiritual center of gravity had unintentionally been shifted from religion to materialism. One of the principal interests of Clarissa comes from the fact that it chronicles this change - of which neither heroine nor author is overtly aware.

Religious attitudes permeate all phases of life in the world of Clarissa as surely as they did life in the Age of Faith; they govern all human intercourse. The novel is an exploration of the nature of love in Puritan society, examining the two elementary human relationships; the parent-child and the male-female. Let us look first at the relationship between Clarissa and her father to see how it is affected by the contemporary currents of religious thought.

Alexander Pope, in his "Essay on Man," presents the accepted view of the social order. Man, in his position between the divine and the beast, has a place in the heavenly bureaucracy which determines his family relationships. Within the family, the father holds the supreme position of authority as delegate of the divine, with the mother and children below him in hierarchial ranking, in the pattern Milton follows in

Paradise Lost. Obedience to parents, and to the father in particular, thus becomes a mark of respect for the law and authority of God. It is a basic fact on which the plot of Clarissa turns, and it is her internal struggle between the need to obey her father and the covert desire to break free from him which supplies the frame for her battle with Lovelace.

This frame story includes the first important action in the book, centering on the question of an arranged marriage between Clarissa and a man she despises. Plot complications hinge on her insoluble problem of trying to remain a dutiful daughter while she is defying her family's wishes. The situation is impossible, and the whole family relationship inevitably breaks down because a Puritan righteousness has been substituted for love.

Clarissa's position is contrasted with that of her friend, Anna Howe. The two girls are natural parallels, and it is partly through their differing attitudes toward their parents in their similar situations that we come to know Clarissa. The lively Miss Howe is quite unlike the exemplary Clarissa and defies her mother in a positively Twentieth Century manner. Sure that she is right, she suffers no qualms of conscience. Clarissa, on the other hand, always puts her parents in the right. Because obedience to parents is a duty to God Himself, the need for parental approval is as real to her as the need for food. Even when family pressures are most savage, and she feels that her parents have exceeded the bounds of natural authority, she never condemns them. She cannot, though she is in the untenable position of upholding the spirit of her obligation to them while they are forcing her into disobeying its letter.

Freud stresses the importance of family relationships in the development of personality, particularly of the super-ego, incorporating conscience. Clarissa's conscience has been formed by the Protestantism of her family, and she cannot violate its tenets without psychological difficulty. Her problem goes even deeper; in her personal struggle toward perfection, her ideas of filial obedience have reached exaggerated proportions, and the outlines of heavenly father and earthly father have become somewhat blurred in her mind. Her worship of God includes an unnatural veneration for his earthly representative, and - out of her sense of duty - she has unconsciously molded herself in his harsh and forbidding image. This unholy triumvirate of Father, father and father/self governs Clarissa in her relationship with Lovelace and it is therefore important to understand it.

One section of the book brings this out particularly clearly. Clarissa writes to Lovelace to tell him of her approaching death and refers euphemistically to her return to her "father's house." She is using the words in their Biblical sense here, but the several uses she subsequently makes of them say a good deal about her father's influence on her and about its real importance. The phrase from the Book of John, "In my Father's house are many mansions. . . ," contains the central symbolism of this part of the book compressed into a complex of subtle meanings which we can try to unravel.

First, there is the inscription she orders for her coffin, giving the date of her death as "April x." This is the day Clarissa left Harlowe Place for the last time, and in her use of it here we see the power of the psychologically internalized attitude toward obedience. Death, to her is not really the rape as she supposes, but her own defiance of her father's authority.

Money obtained by selling her clothes pays for the coffin. Richardson reminds us of the richness of her worldly condition with his description of the quantity and quality of the wardrobe furnished by her parents while she was still the family favorite. The fact of the sale indicates her own strong feeling of unworthiness to participate in the life she once shared with her family. She refers to the coffin (purchased through a symbolic renunciation of her place in the earthly social order) as a "mansion."[5] The "mansions" in the pertinent Biblical lines are the mansions of the risen spirit where the triumphant Christian will, through union with Christ, be prepared for the final revelation of God the Father. Clarissa has twisted the meaning to transfer this message at the heart of the Christian resurrection philosophy to a reference to the container for her dead body. She makes preparations for her "wedding garments"[6] - the clothes she is to be buried in - but the coffin-mansion suggests, not the ritual preparation for marriage with Christ as she believes, but a union of love and death. In the inscription, she has already connected the idea of her father with her death, and earthly and heavenly fathers are merged as she uses the phrase (which is in her mind constantly) to mean both. Now, with the addition of the association of mansion to coffin, and wedding dress to shroud, the psychological confusion is complete. In the interrelated and disordered uses Clarissa makes of a phrase, we detect a real connection between God, Mr. Harlowe, marriage, and death, and some sort of identity of all of them in her unconscious mind.

The relationships of Clarissa and her father, and of Clarissa and Lovelace are revealed gradually - and simultaneously - to the reader with the father-child relationship illuminating the male-female. Richardson

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[5]Samuel Richardson, Clarissa Harlowe (New York, 1950).

[6]Ibid., p. 686.

makes us see that Clarissa's actions must always be considered in the light of her feeling for both men, as both are responsible for the complicated motivations of her actions. On the surface, however, Clarissa's feeling for her father and her dealings with him are mere background, subordinate to the main concern - the conflict between Clarissa and Lovelace. These two are, in a sense, the only major characters in the book; on one level, they represent the bourgeoisie in opposition to the aristocracy, on another the contention between faith and secularism. In the oversimplification of allegory, they become Good and Evil.

Richardson, writing from the middle-class point of view, presents the aristocratic Lovelace as Mephistopheles, attractive enough to make Clarissa's attraction to him entirely credible and to illustrate through a sexual motif the psychological appeal of evil. Imagery equates Lovelace with darkness, and there are even actual references to him as devil. Demonic impulses are attributed to him as early as his first letter. A basic sadism in his relations with women is introduced when he speaks casually of his resolve to punish all women for the cruelty of an early love. The revenge theme becomes something more sinister with his friend Belton's disclosure that he has always enjoyed torturing the animals or people whom he loves. He seems devil indeed, but in a very modern sense in which evil is the heart of darkness within the human personality. On the surface, he is the rational principle, controlled by an underlying sensuality without Protestant restraint, but underneath, he appears to be the id.

Clarissa, in comparison, is presented as the symbol of purity and Protestant piety, and when we look at her as her own world did, we are forced to accept Mr. Belton's evaluation:

> . . . in the bloom of her youth and beauty: and who, her tender years considered, has not left behind her superior in extensive knowledge and watchful prudence; nor hardly

> her equal for unblemished virtue, exemplary piety, sweetness of manners, discreet generosity, and true Christian charity: and these all set off the most graceful modesty and humility; yet on all proper occasions manifesting a noble presence of mind and true magnanimity; so that she may be said to have been not only an ornament to her sex but to human nature.[7]

As she appears to Mr. Belton, Clarissa appears to herself.

Psychologists have established the fact that the view of the self is determined by the "looking-glass image" of what we image the judgment of our primary group to be of that self. So it is with Clarissa; she has been a docile child with a happy disposition and extraordinary physical attractiveness, which have brought her approval and praise all her life. Her "religious turn"[8] serves to bolster the good opinion of herself she has absorbed from her family and friends for she derives a comfortable feeling of righteousness from the peculiar bookkeeping account of good deeds performed and sins atoned which she employs.

In the Clarissa-Lovelace relationship viewed as class struggle, the battle lines are clearly drawn with the forces of evil pitted against the forces of light, but no explanation of Eighteenth Century mores and social customs can begin to get at the heart of the relationship which Leslie Fiedler has correctly identified as cataclysmic.[9] It becomes important, not for what it shows of the overt motives and actions of sociologically opposing factions, but for what it reveals of the human heart when it is fashioned by a predominately Puritan society.

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[7] Ibid., p. 710.

[8] Ibid., p. 556.

[9] Leslie Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel, (New York, 1960), "Richardson and the Tragedy of Seduction," p. 29.

Though the relationship is essentially sexual, Clarissa does everything possible to suppress the physical element, with the result that its unacknowledged presence becomes the most real thing in the book. Her society defines original sin principally in terms of the lusts and sexual desires of the flesh, and finds beauty in sexlessness. Man thus becomes, in a sense, her enemy, and Clarissa certainly never disagrees with Miss Howe who repeatedly declares that no man living is worthy of her. Instead, Clarissa sees herself as a kind of Beatrice figure who can show the sinful Lovelace the way of truth and light, but to the reader, she exhibits all the faults of a religious view which concentrates on evil rather than good, with pride and judgment taking the place of love and forgiveness. Like D. H. Lawrence's Miriam, Clarissa is so afraid of physicality that nothing but sterility is possible in her affair with Lovelace. Lovelace understands these limitations, and in his strange way, is attracted by them. He writes to John Belton:

> I trembled between admiration and love; and wrapped my arms about her knees, as she sat. She tried to rise at the moment; but my clasping round her thus ardently, drew her down again; and never was woman more frightened. But free as my clasping emotion might appear to her apprehensive heart, I had not, at the instant, any thought but what reverence inspired. And till she had actually withdrawn (which I permitted under promise of a speedy return, and on her consent to dismiss the chair) all the motions of my heart were pure as her own. She kept not her word.[10]

She is afraid of being swept beyond her depth by a passion she denies, and seeks security in unresponsiveness. It is ironic that the merest hint of a retreat from this inflexible position might well have altered the shape of the affair into something viable and good, but her invincibility merely increases the strength of Lovelace's sadistic determination

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[10]Richardson, p. 345-346.

to humble her. The abduction compares with the mythological kidnapping of Persephone and the decent to Hades. Mrs. Sinclair's brothel has an underworld atmosphere in which Lovelace is Pluto and the women his minions.

The Clarissa-Lovelace relationship is intrinsically Puritan, but it transcends Puritanism's definitive mores to become the elemental struggle between primeval man and woman - a battle not for domination merely of the physical body, but of the entire personality. Each protagonist fears unconsciously that unless he masters the soul of the other, he will lose himself in some kind of spiritual damnation. Physiology is at war with pyschological instinct, and the result is a spiritual disharmony which emerges in masochism and sadism so powerful that they threaten to destroy the personalities of the lovers before our eyes - and the reader cannot escape the feeling that what this book says about the male-female relationship and the nature of man is terrifyingly true.

Up to this point, we have considered Clarissa and the Puritan failure, but we cannot ignore Lovelace in the villain's role Richardson assigns to him. His theories on marriage display his aristocratic profligacy, and a cavalier contempt for convention. To Belton he explains his view of love in which the element of doubt is the essential in keeping,

> the happy pair, instead of sitting dozing and
> nodding at each other in opposite chimney corners
> in a winter evening, and over a wintry love, always
> new to each other, and having always something to say.[11]

He has reduced the Ulysses quest theme to sexual terms, and for him, as for Odysseus, the search itself is the reality. While Odysseus sought self-knowledge and the meaning of life, Lovelace looks only for love.

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[11] Ibid., pp. 287-288.

But the demands of Lovelace's kind of love do not parallel those of life. Because he is superficial and immature, he does not even suspect the existence of the love defined by St. Paul, "whose service is perfect freedom." Clarissa, more dangerously, thinks she understands it.

Lovelace's intellectual precocity and emotional immaturity make a dangerous combination, and knowledge of the truth is no help at all, merely stimulating his desire to find out if the ice maiden is capable of loving "anybody but her father and mother."[12] Immaturity is further indicated in the ambivalence toward Clarissa which he knows is motivated by his hatred and fear of the power of love. He could be the medieval devil, but he seems also to be man. Lovelace is man who cannot grasp the implications of real love and who fears its demands. Here lies a clue to the powerful conflict which is the subject of this book and which is the conflict plaguing humanity since the creation. Lovelace, in confessing his fear of love's mastery, touches the core of the problem of reconciling the irreconcilable ideas of love and human individuality. Only the most mature individual has the inner security to surrender his personality fully to the demands of a relationship so difficult that only "he that loseth his life shall find it."

Lovelace, speaking of hatred and fear, seems to be reaching the thing which has caused man in his spiritual impotence to equate divinity with virginity and to devise love ideals which circumvent the natural relationship. Though the fear is voiced here by reason, it is as real to the Puritan Clarissa as to the rational Lovelace. As the key to their affair, it suggests a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts,

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[12] Ibid., p. 287.

because Richardson has reached into man's mythic past and put his hands on elements of human experience so basic that they are a part of universal truth. The realization is uncomfortable, for in the relationship of Lovelace and Clarissa there is nothing of love or kindness or even sex in the ordinary sense; instead, there is a kind of loveless power struggle, sexually motivated, which is an undeclared fight to the death.

With technical complications completed, Richardson's plot reaches it climax in the actual rape. Lovelace has exhausted every possible means to seduction, and Clarissa, clothed in Puritan righteousness and virginal white, has withstood every advance. He is reduced to drugs and violence, but he is a Pyrrhic victor, for the violation of her body never touches Clarissa's spirit which is the real battlefield. Though these two come from very different backgrounds, both have reached a spiritual stasis and can only fight for dominance in a master-slave relationship for whose outcome both will share the responsibility.

The importance of the rape lies in its psychological aspects and in its effects on the two competitors. Lovelace reveals a good deal of himself as he describes to John Belton what he hopes will be its outcome:

> There may possibly be some <u>cruelty</u> necessary; but there may be <u>consent in struggle</u>; there may be <u>yielding in resistance</u>. But the first conflict over, whether the following may not be weaker and weaker, till <u>willingness</u> ensue, is the point to be tried. I will illustrate what I have said by the simile of a bird new-caught. We begin, when boys, with birds, and when grown up, go on to women; and both, perhaps, in turn, experience our sportive cruelty.[13]

With open sadism he enjoys picturing Clarissa as the captive bird, but the physical act proves his assessment of the situation faulty. Even while she is still his captive, positions are reversed, and she becomes

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[13]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 308.

a kind of devouring female principle, who derives spiritual nourishment from his body and blood in a parody of the Sacrament of the Holy Communion. "Whatever they have done to me, I cannot tell; but I am no longer what I was in any one thing,"[14] she tells Miss Howe, but we feel that she is only partly right. If she is not the same in any one thing, she is what we have all along suspected she was capable of becoming, because she is so like her unloving father.

Earlier, we suggested an identification of Clarissa with Persephone, and here the parallel with the myth becomes most pertinent; as Clarissa's story now deviates from Persephone's, we find the way opening to new depths of hell in the human spirit which are not present in the myth. Clarissa, like Persephone, has been made the unwilling bride of darkness, but in a display of masochism, she refuses to return to earth, seeking instead a new level of darkness which changes love into death. Choosing death and darkness over regeneration and life, Clarissa has taken the fertility myth and renounced the life cycle in a permanent identification with death. She interprets her reaction to the rape as a regenerative Christian exercise in humility and love, but she is wrong. She is trapped in the Puritan background which always keeps her from seeing herself with truth. Having established her superiority over Lovelace, she uses it deliberately, if unconsciously, for a pagan orgy of revenge which she mistakes for forgiveness.

Clarissa is a splendid example of the divided personality which Diderot calls the "double image." Here real tragedy is revealed as we see that on one level of reality she is what she sees herself to be. Her agony over the rejection of her parents is real; her concern for Mrs. Norton is

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[14] Ibid., p. 439.

is sincere; and she does have the qualities to transform Lovelace if she were free to use them. But on another level of personality, she demonstrates a dreadful confusion on one of the most important questions affecting man: the nature of his relation to his fellow man and to God. The love and forgiveness of which she speaks could bring her back again to life in a real union with man and God, but what she actually feels takes her increasingly into a state of moral isolation:

> I am now above the quick sense of those pleasures which once most delighted me, and once more I say that I do not wish to see objects so dear to me which bring me back again into sense and rival my supreme love.[15]

It is interesting to note in passing that Spenser's Red Cross Knight is saved from the same temptation by contemplation of heavenly things learned of Fidelia, Speranza and, above all, Charissa. If Clarissa had any understanding of the love which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" she might see that what she supposes to be love of God is really love of death whom she accepts without the reservations and inhibitions which characterize her feeling for Lovelace.

Plainly, she enjoys playing the part of the "suffering servant" of the Lord, and the imagery of whiteness and brightness which has surrounded her through the book is extended. She is repeatedly "the broken lily," he the "destructive caterpillar," the "cankerworm," though her behavior is no less omniverous.

Lovelace, as usual, sees through all the surface pretenses that keep the other characters from understanding Clarissa. While she is

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[15] Ibid., pp. 685-686.

saying, "I bless God, though I have been unhappy . . . yet have I not wilfully made any one creature so."[16]

Lovelace writes to Belton:

> Her desire for revenge insensibly became stronger than her desire for life; and now she is willing to die, as an event which she thinks will cut my heart strings asunder. And still the more to be revenged, puts on the Christian and forgives me.[17]

His own early desire for revenge he now sees paralleled in Clarissa, and he identifies her love-death preoccupation; she is encouraging another lover, he says, whose name "is DEATH."[18] But he does not quite understand the relationship to her family as it finally relates to himself:

> Strange, confoundedly strange, and as perverse (that is to say womanly) as strange, that she should refuse, and sooner choose to die. . . than be mine, that offended by acting in character, while her parents acted shamefully out of theirs, and when I am now willing to act out of my own to oblige her; yet I am not to be forgiven! They to be faultless with her . . .! Surely thou must see the inconsistency of her forgiving unforgiveness, as I may call it![19]

This is the non-introspective Lovelace speaking, the man who indignantly calls himself a man of honor, and proves it to his own satisfaction in spite of the rape. He is blind to his own character, but not to hers, and he is right in the inconsistencies he points out in her feeling toward him and toward her family. These inconsistencies are important to us as they show us that, though she is in the act of changing, she is still essentially the same.

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[16]Ibid., p. 691.

[17]Ibid., p. 692.

[18]Ibid., p. 561.

[19]Ibid., p. 564.

She is still the Puritan love ideal, who like the Sirens, is the muse of death, capable of luring the unwary to destruction. Her physical beauty is like the siren song, obscuring her malignant innocence. Spiritually dedicated to her own purity, she has never been capable of love. She has always symbolized the virgin goddess, and she has now become the huntress, who, like Artemis, will brook no violation of her chastity. Lovelace, who is, in his own terminology, the hunter, becomes Actaeon - turned into the hunted by the goddess, and torn to death by his own dogs.

The imagery of hunting which has persisted throughout the book changes with Lovelace's damnation dream, and the vision is described in Puritan terminology. He imagines the ascension of a beatified Clarissa and his own descent into a bottomless hell. The torments of his conscience are suggested through the increasingly frequent references to sin and damnation as he is made fully aware of the certainty that Clarissa will die. Words like "lost," "cursed," "avenging," "punished," color his letters, and his description of his mental state during the illness following her death as "dark and confused . . . all remorse and horror"[20] show the depths of the hell into which he is descending. The hell is his own divided nature, and his behavior in suffering only serves to emphasize the nature of the division.

In his deranged determination to have Clarissa's body after her death, Lovelace seems to be still seeking the possession of her which eluded him in life. Though his moment of physical domination had no meaning, he now attaches some macabre significance to it - because there is nothing else. His ambivalent feelings about marriage are not really

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[20]Ibid., p. 756.

resolved until death makes marriage an impossibility; consequently, there is no resolution at all. Nothing is left but the ashes of a debased relationship of love and the knowledge of the power of evil.

From the first, this has been a relationship of unrealized love and rationalized torture, of guilt and repression in a world which seems to extend beyond actuality, reminiscent of Wuthering Heights - though one feels that Kathy and Heathcliffe are creatures of Emily Bronte's imagination rather than spirits who speak to the human condition out of the truth of myth as Lovelace and Clarissa do.

Clarissa's last note to him reveals one final aspect of their relationship. Sent posthumously as a dramatic bid for his soul's salvation, it ends with the message she meant for him to have all along: She is ashamed of having loved him, she says, having known from the first that he was an immoral man,

> . . . indeed sir, I have long been greatly above you; for from my heart I have despised you, and all your ways ever since I first saw what manner of man you were.[21]

This is the virgin goddess, but is it also woman - that woman who speaks in so much of literature - La Belle Dame Sans Merci? Lovelace has always sensed Clarissa's primitive pride in her female superiority; it has stimulated his compulsion to dominate her, setting pride against pride in a prelude to tragedy.

Pride is the quality which distinguishes both these narcissistic people. She represents the rigid Puritan pride and demonstrates the limitations of the Puritan philosophy as it assumes a simplicity in the problem of good and evil which does not really exist. At various stages

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[21] Ibid., p. 753.

of her self-destruction, Clarissa assures Miss Howe that she is profiting from her experiences because they have taught her humility and shown the enormity of her spiritual pride. She has, of course, hit on the truth in a recognition of what her sin actually is, but it has no meaning for her; it is an understanding of the intellect but not of the heart. Her concern for Lovelace's reform has been far less for his salvation than for her own glory as reformer. And her final forgiveness of him shows the ultimate depth of religious hypocrisy. She makes a great show of forgiveness, but she is like Portia who speaks most movingly of "the quality of mercy" when she least understands it. She knows, or thinks she knows, that "in the course of justice, none of us should see salvation," but the dramatic scene involving Lovelace which she imagines and describes in her will is interesting:

> Let him behold and triumph over the wretched remains of one who has been made a victim to his barbarous perfidy: but let some good person, as by my desire, give him a paper, whilst he is viewing the ghastly spectacle, containing these few words only: 'Gay, cruel heart! behold here the remains of the once ruined yet now happy Clarissa Harlowe! See what thou thyself must quickly be; - and REPENT!'[22]

with its revealing follow-up lines:

> Yet to show that I die in perfect charity with all the world, I do most sincerely forgive Mr. Lovelace the wrongs he has done me.[23]

There is no love or forgiveness here - only self-delusion.

Ironically, it is her belief in God and her dependence on the doctrines of formal religion which keep her from seeing what she is doing. Because she believes, she thinks she understands. With the new Protestant

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[22] Ibid., p. 738.

[23] Ibid., p. 738.

individual moral responsibility, she develops a sense of righteousness which makes her quick to judge and condemn others without seeing that what she takes to be free will and rational interpretation of God's word is, instead, action determined by the unconscious, colored by belief.

Lovelace represents the pride of intellect, whose limitations are no less comprehensive. Rationalization has allowed him to accept his own immoral behavior and prevented any emotional awareness of its real consequences. His frankness in admitting some flaws in his nature and in examining some of his motivation gives him the illusion of a self-understanding which he really does not have. Man's intellect, which is his greatness, can also be his weakness, and in developing Lovelace, Richardson has displayed an instinctive understanding of the intellectual limitations imposed by the relationship of the conscious to the unconscious. Intellect and emotion are irrevocably united in Lovelace as surely and as disastrously as in Clarissa. Good and evil live and flourish side by side in both these two. They are, after all, very much alike, and whether the spirit or the intellect - the Puritan or the pagan - prevails, man knows not himself and evil triumphs. Whatever man's makeup or environment, Richardson seems to say, he is limited by the division of the human spirit into mind and heart as Pascal would define it, or into conscious and unconscious as in Freud's interpretation.

One dimension of the book's statement on the nature of man is developed through the peripheral relationship of Clarissa and her family in the affair of the arranged marriage. In a society in the process of change from communal to associational, the extended family is still the important social unit, and it is not surprising to find the Harlowes <u>en masse</u> concerned in arranging an advantageous match, but the letters gradually reveal the fact

that each family member has his own peculiar interest in the affair. Arabella is jealous of her more attractive sister; James wishes to punish her for inheriting the bulk of their grandfather's estate; and the uncles and Mr. Harlowe want to see their own prestige enhanced by a match that will increase the family's financial power. We see Richardson's view of the complications of human relationships, and feel the limitation of human interaction when we are shown these members of a close-knit family, presumably acting out of love and good will, so twisted by jealousy, pride, and desire for power, that they create an atmosphere in which tragedy is inevitable.

The book ends with the loose ends of the story neatly tied in place. The wicked are punished and the good rewarded. Miss Howe becomes reconciled to the match arranged by her mother; the Harlowes are condemned to years of remorse and guilt. But the book has dealt too exhaustively with the great questions of moral evil for the reader to be satisfied with an obvious demonstration of cause and effect and of reward and punishment. Even on the surface, this is no simple story of clear-cut right and wrong as it is often considered. Merchant class morality triumphs over aristocratic evil in the end, it is true, but it is middle-class avarice which has allowed the situation to develop. Moral indignation covers cruelty and hatred. James Harlowe's antagonism to his sister is so deep that, as Cousin Morden says, he has done "more to ruin his sister than Lovelace himself."[24] "The whole family is <u>too</u> <u>rich</u> to be either <u>humble</u>, <u>considerate</u>, or <u>contented</u>."[25] We are left with the realization that what appears in this surface reading to be social and moral order is really Shakespeare's

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[24]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 678.

[25]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 671.

"Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms." The nature of society is, after all, dependent on the nature of man himself, and Richardson's conclusion seems to be found in the words of Colonel Morden during his last encounter with Lovelace. The two meet on the Continent in a scene which is given particular weight by its presentation as an extension of Lovelace's damnation dream.

Colonel Morden refers to Clarissa's posthomous plea to him not to avenge her death. The question she asks him is the question of the book, "Where shall the evil stop?"[26] He replys to her words with another question: "No good man," he says, "but must be influenced by them. But alas! sir, who is good?"[27] The answer is in his own action. He has been presented as an ideal combination of the rational and the instinctive, but he kills Lovelace in spite of Clarissa's death-bed request; and Lovelace dies, refusing the sacraments of the church, headed for eternal damnation in a Puritan Hell. The demands of the plot have been fulfilled, and the human condition has been outlined. Revenge, not love, is the prime mover because no man is good - and the evil will never stop.[28]

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[26] Ibid., p. 760.

[27] Ibid., p. 760.

[28] I was interested to find in Leslie Fiedler's analysis of the Clarissa-Lovelace affair (note 9, p. 10) that he uses some of the same terms I do - "goddess" and "myth" for example. We say some of the same things, and he says them a great deal better. We reach somewhat different conclusions, however, as he writes from a slightly different point of view.

CHAPTER III

THE GOTHIC NOVEL AND THE SCHOOL OF RICHARDSON

It could hardly be said that Clarissa Harlowe lives up to Henry James' requirement that a novel be interesting; as Samuel Johnson put it, anybody who reads Clarissa for the story would hang himself. But though the book lacks surface appeal, it is important because of its relationship to later novels in England and America. Its first literary descendant is the Gothic novel, though there may be difficulty in seeing at a glance how the tale of terror and the occult can be considered a part of the same tradition which was established with the publication of the story of the life and death of a daughter of an Eighteenth Century middle-class merchant. To show a connection, let us turn for a moment to the requirement for the novel outlined by E. M. Forster. Interpreting the French critic, Alain, he says

> that each human being has two sides appropriate to history and fiction. All that is observable in a man - that is to say his actions and such of his spiritual existence as can be deduced from his actions - falls into the domain of history. But his romanceful or romantic side includes "the pure passions, that is to say the dreams, joys, sorrows and self-consumings which politeness or shame prevent him from mentioning," and to express this side of human nature is one of the chief functions of the novel.[29]

Richardson manages to fulfill Forster's demands in a book about people his Eighteenth Century audience could understand, which examines the depths of the soul with complete subjectivity as his characters reveal themselves

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[29]Forster, p. 73.

between the lines of their letters. Under the surface order of contemporary convention, he looks at the aspects of thought we commonly call romantic - which emphasize instinct, emotion, and that sensibility which goes so far as to "regard reason itself as an aberration of Nature."[30] The very nature of Richardson's subject matter suggests the presence of this rebellious reassertion of the importance of the individual. This quality of Romanticism takes several generally identified forms - one of which leads inward into the realm of the spirit, as in Clarissa; another outward into the remote past, as in the Gothic novel.

To understand what the Gothic novel is and how it relates to Forster's definition of the novel and to Richardson's Clarissa, it will be necessary to look at examples. We will consider The Castle of Otranto, which established the mode, and The Monk, representative of the Gothic in maturity.

The form originated with the 1765 publication of The Castle of Otranto by Horace Walpole, who, as son of the Whig statesman, Sir Robert Walpole, had grown up near the center of the political and social stage of a world he rejected. His book, as he pointed out in a letter to a French friend, was not written "pour ce siècle-ci, que ne veut que de la raison froide."[31] He wrote in reaction against the characteristics of the Age of Reason, though he did not see himself as an exponent of another current of Eighteenth Century thought which was moving as profoundly toward expression as the more openly recognized rationalism. His "goblin tale," as Sir Walter Scott called it, is interesting to another age as he rather

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[30]Basil Willey, Eighteenth Century Background (London, 1941), p. 188.

[31]Horace Walpole to Mme. du Deffand quoted in Oswald Doughty "Introduction" The Castle of Otranto (London, 1928), p. li.

pathetically anticipated, but for reasons quite different from those he described; he saw his visions and passions as alien to his time, but we look at his work as source material in an examination of the Eighteenth Century view of the nature of man.

Otranto is interesting to us initially because of its immense popularity in its own time. Like many later best sellers, it lacks literary quality, but the fact that a book quite outside the range of contemporary convention should achieve instant success suggests that its material appealed to some unidentified element in the minds of both its readers and its author. We can try to find out what this was.

Walpole uses the conventions of medieval romance for his horror story. It is as though he had taken one episode from some French or English metrical romance and expanded it into a novel by ornamenting it with detail. The setting for his story is an ancient castle; his actors are the highborn lords and ladies of romance and epic. The ladies are virtuous and beautiful, and in distress. Their rescuer, brave and courteous, is a nobleman in disguise. Love, profane and sacred, provides the plot.

Spenser demonstrates that one can recreate the atmosphere of the Middle Ages in an era quite foreign to it, but Walpole clearly is not similarly successful. The attitudes and motivations of the characters with whom he peoples his medieval landscape are produced from the Eighteenth Century thought patterns he is attempting to escape from.

The concepts of marital obligation, which immobilized Mrs. Harlowe, and filial obedience, which molded Clarissa, reappear in Otranto. In fact, careful reading of The Castle of Otranto shows that it is essentially very different from the medieval work it is ostensibly modelled on. The stock

situation of distressed maiden rescued by knight-errant is not supposed to include an oppressive parent in the background, and courtly lovers are not concerned with personal salvation.

The story here is complicated by the presence of not one, but three virtuous, beautiful women, and two love stories. These stories do not develop around the ideas of courtly love, but around the Puritan sex symbolism which all these women represent. Hippolyta, wife of Manfred, Duke of Otranto, is the symbol at maturity, and in one of the few humanly satisfactory touches in the book, she is pictured as the perfect wife who is a failure in her role because she bores her husband to death. All the characters are what E. M. Forster calls "flat characters," expanded only enough to represent some one quality. Hippolyta is the Puritan ethos, and even within the confines of Walpole's inferior work, she indicates some of the shortcomings of the Puritan point of view. She is governed by only one element, the spiritual, and can never come alive as a character, or as a woman. She remains the cardboard symbol - the goddess on the pedestal - idealized, idolized and forgotten, but she reminds us that the symbol becomes the reality, as in Clarissa, where man's physical nature is unacknowledged.

Reflecting the Puritan division of mind and spirit, Hippolyta is the spirit, and Manfred reason. Like Lovelace, he is the intellectual man controlled by sensuality with "virtues . . . always ready to operate"[32] when his reason is not obscured by passion, representing the Puritan view of physical man as the opposite of spiritual woman. That view of human nature which assigns to woman the function of being and to man the function

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[32]Walpole, p. 18.

of doing is interpreted by the Puritan in terms which see female being as sexlessness and male doing as lust - here Manfred's for the young Isabella.

The complications which make up the major part of the book concern the pure young maiden, Matilda, and her male counterpart, Theodore - the physical ideals. The misunderstandings which keep the young couple apart are of no particular interest here; they are melodramatic, involved, and conventional in the extreme. It is the ending of the affair which makes it arresting. Union between these two is prevented by Matilda's violent, accidental death. She is stabbed by her father who mistakes her for Isabella of whom he is jealous. Lust prevents the consummation of love, and we are again confronted with a male-female relationship whose sexual elements lead it toward death instead of life. Death, in itself, does not constitute tragedy. In any Christian context it is part of the divine comedy, but death which represents the denial of life as it does here is actually a denial of love, and by Dante's definition, the complete separation from God in the final circle of Hell.

William James has said that the most profound religious question that man can ask himself is, "Is life worth living?" His point, of course, is that religion is life-affirming, that it demands an I-thou relationship in which commitment is to man and to life without reservation - an unconditional relation in the conditional surroundings of life. Walpole opposes this hypothesis. Love between Matilda and Theodore must be prevented because it includes the idea of love which suggests a sexual unity. The ideal union of two spiritual components may not become physical. Walpole allows Theodore to marry Isabella, who is as beautiful and innocent as Matilda, only because he does not love her, and cannot, therefore, enter into the relationship which James defines and which the Puritans so fear.

The parallels between The Castle of Otranto and Clarissa Harlowe have not been drawn in an effort to force some kind of artificial connection. The similarities do exist, stemming from the identical attitudes toward life which the two books share, and relating the Gothic novel to the literary tradition of Richardson. Both books overtly react against contemporary rationalism, but, to borrow D. H. Lawrence's phraseology,[33] they both have a kind of duplicity - explicitly supporting the conventional Puritan morality which they implicitly seek to destroy. There is a subliminal support of romantic individualism and a recognition of the physical side of man's nature which a look at Walpole's view of the nature of man may help to make clear.

Man, Walpole tells us, lives in a world of evil and corruption. The good are the weak, and power is concentrated in the hands of the wicked who are the only ones with the strength to maintain it. But if man is wicked, God is good, and though it takes supernatural intervention to affirm it, good will triumph in the end. The Dukedom is returned to its rightful heir who is rewarded for his goodness with wealth and a beautiful bride. The conclusion is trite; we have heard it before in a hundred nursery tales. The real interest is in the mind-spirit dichotomy and the definition of sin. The evil in Otranto is lust, as it was in Clarissa, and again it results in violence perpetrated on the sinless female. Walpole, who repudiates "la raison froide," combines it in his work with sensuality and shows the two as inseparable - with physical passion controlling reason. Further, lust determines the nature of both important male-female relationships in the book. It first destroys the marriage between Manfred

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[33] D. H. Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature (New York, 1923).

and Hippolyta, and then takes the life of Matilda. The love which leads to death speaks less forcefully in Otranto than in Clarissa because of the difference in the quality and depth of the two works, but it touches the same fault in a concept of man which impugns the dignity of his physical nature. Pope says that man is neither angel nor beast, and Walpole and Richardson show that it is dangerous to insist that he is both, while cutting the bridge of communication between the two by denying his physical humanity.

So far, the discussion has avoided any mention of Otranto's artificial decorations - the giant helmet, the bleeding statue, the subterranean passages. These things set the superficial tone for the novel, but add nothing to an interpretation of Walpole's statement. They matter because they identify the Gothic mode in which the conventions could be used as an integral part of the unity of the action. A book in which this can be seen with particular clarity is The Monk, by M. G. Lewis, which appeared thirty years after The Castle of Otranto. It is used here to show the Gothic novel at maturity, and through a consideration of it in relation to Otranto, to show what the Gothic novel really is and what it represents as a mirror of the Eighteenth Century mind.

The Monk appears to be a diatribe against monasticism and the superstitions and controls of the Roman Catholic Church. Its chief character is an abbot of a Franciscan order who has lived in the monastery since early childhood, withdrawn from the world and shaped by the monastic rule. By creating a character who has known no other influences, Lewis furnishes himself with the opportunity to isolate the qualities of religious education he condemns, and to examine their effects on personality. The Monk introduces Ambrosio dramatically in an appearance in the pulpit of the Capuchin church

in Madrid, "where one half of Madrid was brought thither by expecting to meet the other half" and all "attracted by curiosity to hear an orator so celebrated."[34] His intellectual capabilities, his physical presence, his dynamism are all made clear immediately, so that we know this is no ordinary man. The reader is being prepared for a discussion of his background - but it is deliberately postponed until we have seen him in impressive action before the crowd, and in measured contrast, have seen him yield to his first human temptation.

The monk's description is a catalogue of the deficiencies in his education intended to show how a man "possessed of many brilliant and manly qualities"[35] can find himself so unprepared for life. "Enterprising, firm, and fearless,"[36] he is compassionate, with "abilities quick and shining, and his judgment vast, solid, and decisive"[37] - all qualifications which would have made him "an ornament to his country"[38] had he not fallen into the hands of the Capuchin monks.

Lewis sees monastic life as a perversion of the natural order, and he considers it with a seriousness which seems strangely at variance with the degree of its importance in the actual world - certainly the world of Eighteenth Century England. He protests withdrawal from society because "man is born for society. However little he may be attached to the world,

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[34]M. G. Lewis, The Monk (New York, 1952), p. 35.

[35]Ibid., p. 237.

[36]Ibid., p. 237.

[37]Ibid., p. 238.

[38]Ibid., p. 238.

he never can wholly forget it."[39] But mainly he deprecates the inadequacies of the education which has formed the monk's personality:

> His instructors carefully repressed those virtues, whose grandeur and disinterestedness were ill-suited to the cloister. Instead of universal benevolence, he adopted a selfish partiality for his own particular establishment; he was taught to consider compassion for the errors of others as a crime of the blackest dye; the noble frankness of his temper was exchanged for servile humility; and in order to break his natural spirit, the monks terrified his young mind, by placing before him all the horrors with which superstition could furnish them; they painted to him the torments of the damned in colors most dark, terrible and fantastic, and threatened him at the slightest fault with eternal perdition. No wonder that his imagination constantly dwelling on these fearful objects should have rendered his character timid and apprehensive. Add to this, that his long absence from the great world, and total unacquaintance with the common dangers of life, made him form of them an idea far more dismal than the reality. While the monks were busied in rooting out his virtues, and narrowing his sentiments, they allowed every vice which had fallen to his share to arrive at full perfection. He was suffered to be proud, vain, ambitious, and disdainful; he was jealous of his equals, and despised all merit but his own; he was impacable when offended and cruel in his revenge.[40]

Knowing the monk's faults, we understand his fall as we watch it plotted and subtly carried out by a beautiful woman. Matilda seduces him through an appeal to his pride and his honor, being careful to avoid clumsy physical approaches he would recognize instantly. She uses his innocence to attach herself to him before beginning the physical temptation; and, before he has any idea what is happening, his corruption has advanced so far that lust blinds him to all other evils. The monks have instructed him carefully against sin in its obvious forms, but they know nothing of the subtleties and complexities of evil, and Ambrosio is "yet to learn

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[39] Ibid., p. 76.

[40] Ibid., pp. 238-239.

that to a heart unacquainted with her, vice is ever more dangerous when lurking behind the mask of virtue."[41] The moral destruction of the tragic hero is the theme of the book, and its progression is carefully and skillfully charted. Reason is distorted by sensuality as physicality takes control. Appearances become increasingly important to Ambrosio as he becomes increasingly depraved, until concern for the surface order concealing chaos supplants concern for the chaos of sin itself.

Ironically, Ambrosio, who can lecture on theology with apparent sincerity, conceals from himself any understanding of what he is saying. Truth is platitude, and Christian love is meaningless to him. Lewis is picturing the church in action, and analysing the human imperfections which keep man from knowing himself - for which he considers the church responsible. In a step-by-step downward progression, he leads his friar to a final confrontation with Lucifer and to eternal damnation, picturing the dilemma of his saintly sinner: "Reason forced him to acknowledge a God's existence. Conscience made him doubt the infinity of his goodness,"[42] a description of the hell on which Hell ultimately depends for Ambrosio.

In spite of its extravagance and the distractions of a series of subplots, the general theme seems successful until, somewhere in the reading, a new play of light and shadow on plot and character gives a glimpse of the book's action in a new perspective. We see the whole novel as an investigation of asceticism which can be looked at on several levels and which approaches the unity of a work of art.

We have had a variety of clues: insistence on the dangers of withdrawal from life and ignorance of its temptations, the suggestion that

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[41] Ibid., p. 103.

[42] Ibid., p. 406.

repression and guilt develop a conscience which separates man from God. The description of Ambrosio's education informs this view of the novel, and it is for this reason that it is quoted at such length. The personality outlined has a familiar sound - harsh, servile, proud, intolerant, afraid of hell, afraid of life - whom does it describe? Those stern old followers of Calvin, the Eighteenth Century merchants, might be the models, for the teachings of Puritan Catholicism are those of ascetic Protestantism as well. The virtues the industrial middle-class grimly cultivated - industry, restraint, sobriety, thrift - make the very character here described: vain, ambitious, disdainful, dispising all merit but its own, cruel in revenge. In the contours of Ambrosio, we recognize Mr. Harlowe himself.

We look back to the male-female relationship for confirmation of our suspicions and find we have been put off by Matilda. She reverts to the pre-Puritan idea of the female as temptress, though she does, we now notice, typify the Puritan idea of beauty as the outward covering of inward evil. Her principal function here, however, is to introduce Ambrosio to the sins of the flesh and to translate the Christian sin of pride into the Puritan sin of lust. Her aim accomplished, she withdraws from the sex relationship to prepare the way for the next step toward Ambrosio's destruction - the rape of the virgin.

The eroticism which was submerged in Clarissa and absent in Otranto is consciously used in The Monk. Of Antonia, the now-familiar purity symbol, we are told that

> Her features were hidden by a thick veil; but struggling through the crowd had deranged it sufficiently to discover a neck which for symmetry and beauty might have vied with the Medicean Venus. It was of the most dazzling whiteness, and received additional charms received from being

> shaded by the tresses of her long fair hair, which descended in ringlets to her waist. Her figure was rather below than above the middle size: it was light and airy as that of a Hamadryad. Her bosom was carefully veiled. Her dress was white; it was fastened by a blue sash, and just permitted to peep out from under it a little foot of the most delicate proportions.[43]

The projected rape of the sinless female recalls Clarissa, and Ambrosio's anticipation echoes Lovelace's as ". . . the resistence which he expected from her seemed to give fresh edge to his fierce, unbridled desires."[44]

Antonia is dispatched to the burial vault by a sleeping potion like the one Friar Lawrence gave Juliet, and the affair between Ambrosio and Antonia reaches its conclusion in the subterranean passage. Ambrosio awaits the girl's return to consciousness at midnight in Gothic solitude among "the putrid half-corrupted bodies with their rotting bones and disgusting figures who perhaps were once as sweet and lovely"[45] as she. The crudeness of this reminder of mortality with its contrast between the living and the dead suggest Ambrosio's strongly ambivalent feeling toward the body. Clearly, he exemplifies those Puritan attitudes which attempt to suppress the physical but only succeed in pushing it into the subterranean caverns of the mind. The nature of the close relationship of physical attraction and revulsion parallels the connection between desire and death brought out in the action. "This sepulchre seems to me Love's bower. This gloom is the friendly night of Mystery which he spreads over our delights,"[46] he tells her, and the dark love-death relationship is acted out in the rape of innocence and light, quickly followed by murder.

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[43] Ibid., p. 37.

[44] Ibid., p. 365.

[45] Ibid., p. 364.

[46] Ibid., p. 366.

The phallic symbolism of the dagger is now unmistakeable. Knives and scissors appeared in Clarissa accompanied by threats of suicide; the dagger is the weapon which murders sinlessness in both The Castle of Otranto and The Monk, and the symbolism makes the sex act a death of the spirit. Lewis' protest against this identification can be extended to Puritanism per se by expanding the symbolism to include the whole Gothic paraphernalia. The monastery represents the Church in which a superficial facade of serenity conceals seething corruption underneath. On a second level, the Church becomes the metaphor for Puritan society, and the monastery walls are the barriers man erects against his physical nature. Surface beauty built on such a questionable foundation masks undercurrents of evil which manifest themselves in eruptions of violence. We feel that Lewis is here restating his early warning against the danger of a philosophy which attempts to find truth by separating man from actuality.

On a final level of interpretation, the convent is the human personality. The rigid code of "Thou shalt not's" is the superego, and Ambrosio himself is the id, hiding in the dark and secret places of the unconscious mind. The human unconscious is symbolized by the underground vault which is the scene of rape, murder, torture and demonic possession, and where union of reason and instinct is only a sexual perversion ending in death.

This is the view of the nature of man which both Richardson and Walpole have already presented. Lewis' book is interesting, not so much for new light shed, as for the use of the Gothic conventions in presenting the conflict of good and evil in society and in man himself. Lewis does add one subjective comment which seems worth mentioning.

In one scene, a mob protests the cruelty of a prioress by lynching her, and even after she is dead, they continue to exercise ". . . their

impotent rage upon her lifeless body," mistreating it until it becomes "no more than a mass of flesh, unsightly, shapeless and disgusting."[47] They set fire to the convent, and the flames suggest a purification ritual, but the idea of a mob as cleansing agent is in itself appalling, and condemns the society in which the answer to cruelty and hatred is reciprocal hatred and violence. These retributory acts seem to represent Lewis' own moral judgments on the question of transgression and punishment. He has attacked moral evil, but he seems to advocate the substitution of revenge for mercy. In Puritan society, civilization seems to be only a veneer concealing a primitive savagery nurtured by a singleminded emphasis on spiritual values at the expense of psychological wholeness.

A definition of the Gothic novel is implicit in the foregoing analyses, and a few remarks should serve to complete the discussion and show the relation of the Gothic to other work and its position in the tradition of the developing novel.

The Romantic movement in other forms of literature is contemporary with the Gothic novel and expresses the same individualism. In the latter part of the Eighteenth Century, imagination is being increasingly recognized. Man's isolation in the divorce of the inner world from the outer is more and more apparent, and rationalism is being seriously questioned. The Gothic is merely one reflection of contemporary trends of thought which insist on the re-emphasis in literature, art and philosophy of the unity of mind and heart, of spirit and flesh, in the definition of the nature of man.

The same concerns culminate in the psychological novel of the Twentieth Century. Henry James' technique of viewing an action in terms of its effect on the inner life seems a direct outgrowth, not only of

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[47] Ibid., p. 344.

Richardson's technical methods, but of his philosophy of the novel as well. And while we tend to think of the Gothic novel as a sterile literary mutation, many of its elements are incorporated in a study of man's nature as contemporary as Lord of the Flies. Golding separates reason and instinct in personifications in the same way these writers do, and puts the superego into conflict with the id for control of the total personality as Lewis does. And the physical violence and hidden horror of his story tell the same despairing tale of brutality beneath the civilized surface of the personality of man.

These early dark novels which deal with the inner recesses of man's nature are consistently less good than the light which treat externals - the manners and mores of man in society. They are more difficult to do, and they deal with something only beginning to be understood in the Eighteenth Century, and only partly understood now. Though it remained for the Nineteenth Century to produce a Dostoyevsky to create the finished study of man's double nature, and a Freud to come out of Puritanism to put the dilemma of spiritual dichotomy into a precise and scientific framework, the novelists of the Eighteenth Century made the beginning.

CHAPTER IV

TOM JONES, THE SOCIOLOGICAL VIEW OF MAN

Tom Jones describes the same society we have seen explored in Clarissa, but with an important difference: Fielding is not inhibited by a Puritan outlook. At first, this makes it hard to realize that the two books can be talking about the same world. The intellectual preoccupation with personal salvation has been replaced by a kind of spiritual positivism and a relish for the problems of the here and now. Fielding employs a realism quite different from Richardson's, though Tom Jones does not ignore the question of good and evil, and studies the nature of the order of society quite as earnestly as Clarissa did. The difference is entirely one of viewpoint. Richardson approaches his subject as a psychologist, interested in the individual and the culture which formed him. Fielding, on the other hand, takes the sociological view. He looks at human experience from a perspective emphasizing the collective features of social life, because it is the organized group, rather than its individual member, which is the functional unit of society. Where Richardson sees the effect of culture on personality, Fielding looks for the relationship between society and the individual.

The unusual introduction of a hero who is a fatherless, illegitimate child creates sociological plot complications automatically. Brought up in the household of Mr. Allworthy, Tom acquires the role, but not the status of gentleman, and Fielding uses Tom's anomalous position outside social class to comment on the superficiality of a society which accepts

a young man in one social role (intimate friend and companion) but rejects him in another (suitor) simultaneously.

We know Tom first within the bounds of his immediate family. As we remember, Eighteenth Century social order is concerned as much with the family as with the male-female relationship, and the novel makes no attempt to disassociate the two, but shows us the characters through both. Tom is accepted by Mr. Allworthy, and the two fall into a tentative father-son relationship. Tentative, because the mystery of Tom's true paternity hangs over the whole book - and is one of the elements which connect it with The Odyssey. Tom, like Telemachus, is seeking a father, and an identity, but for the present, Squire Allworthy serves as father substitute.

Because the book has no connection with the Puritan, the relationship of parent and child is stripped of the solemnity it assumes in Clarissa. Filial obedience depends on social custom rather than theological dogma, and though the assumption that a child's first duty is obedience is strong in Tom Jones, the unnatural emotional intensity is lacking. Freed from the rigidities of the Puritan behavior code, individuals can relate to each other with spontaneity and warmth. Hence Tom's respect for his foster father, though it derives in part from current convention, is much more dependent on the fact that Mr. Allworthy deserves the respect.

As a father figure, Mr. Allworthy represents an ideal. He is a man who is just, wise, and honorable, who refuses to judge in anger, who sees good everywhere without ignoring evil. Further, he loved one woman, his wife, with passion and intensity as long as she lived. He is the model against whom Tom's shortcomings are measured through the greater part of the book. Fielding's great skill in handling the relationship becomes evident at the end, when he reverses the positions of the two characters

to show that Tom's instinctive goodness and refusal to judge the behavior of others is more consistent with true morality than Allworthy's wisdom and justice.

With the spiritual significance of parent-child relations removed, other associations assume equal importance. Tom and Master Blifil, as two boys of similar age and the only children in a large household, are natural parallels. In personality, they are opposites, and Fielding bases a good part of the humor of the early sections of the book on the idea of these two as the bad boy and the good boy judged by their contemporaries to be exactly the reverse of what they actually are. From beginning to end, the book is a lampoon on the limitations of conventional society and its inability to tell good from evil. We see Tom from society's point of view in Fielding's tongue-in-cheek description, as

> . . . deficient in outward tokens of respect, often forgetting to pull off his hat or to bow at his master's approach . . . . He was indeed a thoughtless, giddy youth with little sobriety in his manners and less in his countenance; and would often very indecently laugh at his companion for his serious behavior.[48]

Tom, who appears white to the reader, is black according to the judgment of his own group. Master Blifil conforms to all approved social customs with unquestioning obedience: he follows all the tiresome, unimportant rules, and is naturally considered the epitome of virtue. Nobody looks below the surface to his small-mindedness and cruelty.

Fielding speaks of Tom's sins as "the vices of a warm disposition"[49] and sets out to prove that they are unrelated to real evil. Early in the book, he begins to develop a theory of the relativity of goodness

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[48]Henry Fielding, Tom Jones (Garden City, N.Y., 1948), p. 44.

[49]Ibid., p. 275.

and evil, advocating an ethic based on love which transforms itself to meet the demands of any situation. We see it in Tom's behavior. For example, when he and the gamekeeper follow a partridge onto a neighboring estate and are caught poaching, Tom lies to save Black George's job. And when he is unsuccessful, he disrespectfully sells an expensive present from Mr. Allworthy to get money to help the man support his family. Tillich's current definition of morality whose birthplace is "the ground of our being," and which considers lack of love the only intrinsic evil, tells us nothing we cannot learn from Fielding in Tom Jones.

Tom's horizons broaden as he leaves childhood, but Fielding continues to compare him to Master Blifil. Tom grows older, but no wiser, and inevitably he becomes involved in the messy and spectacular sins of the flesh, while Master Blifil's remain the secret sins of the spirit. Of Tom at this stage of his development, Fielding wryly remarks that

> Gallantry to ladies was among his principles of honor and he held it as much incumbent on him to accept a challenge to love as if it had been a challenge to fight.[50]

Though he is forthrightly physical, Tom bears no resemblance to Lovelace, whose decadent sensuality has consumed his spirit. We notice that Tom is never the aggressor in his sexual affairs; he is the conquered, responding to female overtures. It is the sin of imprudence that Fielding is defining amusingly in a sexual framework, not that of lust. In fact he seems to choose the sin of incontinence for Tom in a kind of paradoxical protest against equating sexual irregularities with immorality. All of Tom's transgressions stem from impetuosity and most of them are sexual, but Fielding goes to considerable lengths to establish two facts: first,

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[50]Ibid., p. 253.

that Tom never loses his quality of spiritual innocence, and second, that he loves man and gives of himself and whatever he happens to have - whether kindness to a girl in trouble, or his last shilling to an indigent father - to alleviate human suffering. Tom is committed to man and "involved in mankind" at the same time he is so flagrantly violating middle-class moral codes.

Tom is truly imprudent, but Fielding does not make prudence an ideal in itself. He gives no approbation to Master Blifil's caution - which he combines with reason to produce evil; seeing Tom as a threat to his own inheritance, he schemes to dislodge him from Mr. Allworthy's affections. Fielding is seeking the Platonic harmony of the virtues, and he shows in Master Blifil that reason and prudence do not provide the answer. Impetuosity and cold caution are set against each other in the reactions of Tom and Blifil to the recovery of Mr. Allworthy from a critical illness following the death of his sister. Tom, in unrestrained joy at the good news, gets drunk and celebrates too boisterously while Master Blifil is absorbed in conventional mourning - more for the recovery of his uncle than for the death of his mother. He attacks Tom with words, calling him a bastard. Instinctively, Tom returns the attack with physical blows.

Here Fielding subtly contrasts the value and weight of words maliciously calculated to hurt - insidious because the wounds they create are invisible - with the open tyranny of unpremeditated blows which leave their mark on the flesh. He is setting up a deliberate comparison between physical sin and spiritual sin, testing the meaning of each in its relevance to the ultimate questions of moral good and evil. A Rembrandt etching can be subjected to microscopic examination to show magnificent works of art which appear as details no bigger than a thumbnail in the finished work.

By the same token, careful reading of Fielding will show the precision with which he is constantly examining the realities of human behavior, and the fallacies of interpretation to which they are subjected. Here Master Blifil's attack on Tom escapes detection because his weapons are invisible words, but Tom, who fights back with his clearly visible fists, is condemned as incorrigible, even by Mr. Allworthy.

These early relationships of Tom's with members of his family are only a preliminary to the major action of the book, but already we can see Fielding's thesis evolving. Tom's image as the unregenerate sinner has been made understandable by the public and flamboyant nature of his misbehavior. Fielding makes no attempt to show him as sinless, but misunderstood. His misdemeanors are real, and he deserves censure. The point Fielding makes is that while the disapproval is deserved, the judgments of the neighborhood are made out of hopeless human limitations, and that if the right conclusion is sometimes reached, it is based on the wrong reason. The faceless neighbors form a sort of Greek chorus, judging from a partial view of the situation because spiritual sin is obscured.

The judgments of the major characters are created out of their own self-seeking, and show another kind of limitation. As we have already seen, Master Blifil is anxious to have Tom out of the way because he is a financial threat; his judgments are completely rational, completely hypocritical, based on avarice. As a foil for Tom, Master Blifil is a special case. There is always implied irony in Fielding's treatment of him because society considers him the perfect product of its religious teachings and educational methods.

Conventional religion and educational methods meet unconventionality head on in the persons of the Reverend Mr. Thwackum, the philosoper Square, and Tom. Tom, who resists the idea of goodness imposed from without by any

kind of rule, is no credit to either. Their pride is stung as his misbehavior seems to demonstrate their incompetence as teachers, and they judge him out of wounded pride.

Fielding shows that Tom's troubles - the result of his own imprudence - are magnified by the fact that he is unconventional. He does not mouth the platitudes of his teachers, nor yield submissively to their petty authority. Eventually, even Mr. Allworthy, who represents the highest type of conventional morality, is led to false judgment of Tom because he accepts with too little question the evaluations of Blifil, Thwackum and Square, and, bound by his own conventional viewpoint and its narrow logic, misses the reality of Tom's instinctive goodness. Human judgment of human behavior is wrong, Fielding tells us, because any view is colored and distorted by the personal imperfections of the individual judge.

Though we may have supposed that Tom Jones is conceived out of notions of Eighteenth Century secular philosophy, in this powerful argument against judgment, we see the correlation between Fielding's ideal and the Christian ideal begin to take form. Unlike the other characters, Tom refuses to judge. He loves Master Blifil in spite of his persecutions, and Squire Allworthy in spite of his misjudgments. Unlike Clarissa, who confines her forbearance to her parents, Tom is entirely consistent in his behavior. He is motivated by goodness and love, and represents the ideal of the religion which his detractors profess to support, and whose primary laws are:

> Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment and the second is like unto it:
>
> Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Because the function of organized religion in a well-developed society is frequently to encourage acceptance of prevailing codes and theological doctrine, ritual and organization may take precedence over moral value. Fielding here bases his irony on the fact that people misunderstand and resent the person who exemplifies the morality they pretend to live by. Because Tom attaches more significance to love than to law, he is turned out by his foster father to begin the wanderings which will lead him to self-knowledge and prudence.

Tom Jones is episodic and is made up of the series of experiences which lead Tom to maturity and its reward - marriage with the beautiful and wealthy Sophia Western. Before we consider the importance of this Eighteenth Century Odyssey, we may look for a moment at Sophia, who, as the purity symbol, has considerable interest for us, though as the lifeless model of perfection, she has little in herself. Says Fielding,

> We will endeavor with our utmost skill to describe this paragon, though we are sensible that our highest abilities are very inadequate to the task.
>
> Sophia, then the only daughter of Mr. Western, was a middle-sized woman; but rather inclining to be tall. Her shape was not only exact, but extremely delicate; and the nice proportion of her arm promised the truest symmetry in her limbs. Her hair, which was black, so luxuriant that it reached her middle, before she cut it to comply with the modern fashion; and it was now curled so gracefully on her neck that few could believe it to be her own.[51]

Fielding's artful combination of nature and artificiality in the description makes it seem a satire on sentimental extravagance as he goes on:

> Her eyebrows were full, even and arched beyond the power of art to imitate. Her black eyes had a luster in them which all of her softness could not extinguish . . . nor was this beautiful frame disgraced by an inhabitant

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[51] Ibid., p. 53.

> unworthy of it. Her mind was every way equal to her person . . . ."[52]

Though Fielding makes her amuse us, she never comes alive. She enters the story in the early pages, and the similarity between her situation and Clarissa's is noticeable at once. She is the ideal daughter whose first duty is to obey her father's wishes, and she is being forced into a marriage (to Master Blifil) which she finds impossible - because of its financial advantage. And like Clarissa, she runs away from home to escape the marriage - but here the destinies of the two girls diverge as widely as the philosophies of Richardson and Fielding.

Before any conclusions can be reached, one more digression is necessary - a word about Sophia's father, Squire Western. He is a caricature of the country gentleman of the period, whose passions in life are guns, gods, and horses, and with whom it is "a maxim . . . that women should come in with the first dish and go out after the first glass."[53] He extends his passions to include one woman, however - his daughter, for whose happiness he would spare nothing, though, to insure it, it may be necessary that she "shall live in a garret upon bread and water all her days; and the sooner such a b---- breaks her heart the better."[54] In many ways, Squire Western is the most satisfactory character in the book, for, though as a caricature he does not represent a whole man, he does infuse the book with some of its best Eighteenth Century flavor and passion for life. Like Mr. Harlowe in Clarissa, he sets the tone.

Sophia loves her father, and until the proposed marriage to Blifil, has managed to obey him in spite of his explosive unreasonableness. With

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[52] Ibid., pp. 53-54.

[53] Ibid., p. 131.

[54] Ibid., p. 351.

instinctive distaste, she understands the real character of Master Blifil which escapes everybody else, and so rebels at the match. Though class barriers effectively prevent the possibility of marriage to Tom, she loves him. She sees his failures as clearly as Clarissa sees Lovelace's, but she is not afraid of love or life, acknowledging the one and embracing the other without thought of the cost to herself. Moreover, the ability to love frees her from her father, as it gives her the insight to see where moral obligation really lies.

Sophia is the female principle representing the heart, and as such, definitely secondary to Tom, who is in the act of becoming both mind and heart. Feminine being interests Fielding less than masculine doing because he considers the male the superior element, and in the epic tradition, he concentrates on the exploits of his hero. Sophia's adventures seem important only as counterpoint to Tom's as their paths cross and recross on the London road. But her love for him is the constant against which his own innumerable inconstancies in the episodes of his physical odyssey are measured. Sophia is love, his true salvation; mere physical love repeatedly threatens his downfall.

His final liason is the most important because it is the most dangerous. Fielding equates the city with evil, the aristocracy with depravity, and combines the two in Lady Bellaston. Without Sophia, we feel, she might have effected Tom's destruction. With Sophia always in the background, the affair teaches Tom his first real prudence. Because he loves Sophia, he comes to see the combination of sex and material possessions which Lady Bellaston offers for the tawdry thing it is, and knows he must escape. But he glimpses for the first time the real nature of evil when he finds that he can release himself from the entanglement only by violating his own code of honesty. Imprudence has led him into the situation,

and he suddenly sees its real peril; with new restraint, he rejects Mrs. Fitzpatrick's sexual overtures, and takes a giant step toward maturity, ironically endangered a moment later by the duel with Mr. Fitzpatrick.

The duel is Tom's final impulsive act, and this time he is only partially responsible. His picaresque progress is completed with this last piece of thoughtlessness and the sobering knowledge that he may have killed another human being. Suddenly, he is overwhelmed by the consequences of his unrelated indiscretions. To possible murder is added probable incest and the certainty that the affair with Lady Bellaston has cost him Sophia. Guilt and remorse end at last in self-knowledge, and Tom establishes his permanent spiritual identity.

It is important to remember that this saga of imprudence has been carefully paralleled by a story of acts of kindness as spontaneous and instinctive as the impetuous misbehavior. Tom's instinct has been responsible for both good and evil. Without reason as its complement, Fielding says, it cannot govern man (though it is enough for woman in her secondary position as man's support). With reason, the good man will reject those instinctive reactions which lead him to do evil, while accepting and acting upon those which lead him to good. When Tom learns prudence, he at last achieves the harmonious combination of virtues which make him worthy of Sophia as symbol of purity and prosperity. She, as love, has made his metamorphosis possible. And as love, too, she is free to forgive Tom his transgressions wholeheartedly, without judgment.

Fielding has never abandoned his sociological viewpoint, and new spiritual identity must be matched with acceptable social identity. Tom is revealed as Mrs. Blifil's elder son and Mr. Allworthy's true heir. All barriers disposed of, Tom and Sophia are joined in the ideal sexual

and social relationship - marriage - which leads to fulfillment, life, and, through the birth of children, regeneration.

Fielding's primary purpose in Tom Jones is to define the nature of man, and he has deliberately placed his hero outside the class structure to indicate that he is more than a young country squire. Tom's important qualities are not dependent on group mores, but are based on human love which cuts across all class lines. Tom is quite simply man himself, and Fielding has looked at him to show us what man is and what he may become.

What he has created in Tom Jones is not merely a novel of manners, but a real study of the nature of man through the "direct impression of life" in which character determines incident, and incident illuminates character in a unified sociological whole. Fielding, as a product of neo-classicism, is interested in the relationship of individuals to groups and in the structure and functioning of institutions. Though he has removed his hero from class, he cannot validly consider him outside society, as the individual is important to him as a member of society, and society is important as it affects the individual. He has consequently constructed his plot so that Tom will be observed in contact with people from all walks of life, in rural and urban settings, giving himself the opportunity to create, not only an "imitation of an action," but an imitation of an environment in which to look at the manners and social institutions of a whole world.

Some comment on manners is implicit in the earlier discussion of the book; family relationships and marriage particularly have been considered. There are other serious comments on contemporary manners which point to flaws in the social order, and call for some discussion here. Fielding is emphatic in pointing out the hypocrisy and artificiality of the upper

classes of society as opposed to the middle. He submits both to ridicule - his country squire, as we have seen, is his most effective caricature - but he reserves his harshest criticism for aristocratic attitudes toward money, marriage and life in general. For example, Mrs. Fitzpatrick, a member of the court circle at Bath, remarks, "I made no doubt but that his designs were strictly honorable, as the phrase is; that is, to rob a lady of her fortune by way of marriage."[55] In friendship, the relationship has been refined to the point where artificial politeness has completely replaced love. Under the guise of friendship, Lady Bellaston complacently seduces Sophia's lover and makes plans for Lord Fellemar's attempt at rape. Any immorality is socially acceptable, it seems, so long as it involves no transgression of the rules of etiquette.

Upper-class sexual morality is compared with behavior in other groups. The Irish peer is "the one person of high rank entirely constant to the marriage bed,"[56] and Mrs. Fitzpatrick's successful assault on this impregnable bastion creates its own comment. We are given the middle-class view which embraces the double standard, and the lower class notion that chastity demands only that marriage and the birth of the baby succeed each other in the preferred order. Sexual nonconformity of some sort will be found wherever people are, Fielding suggests, and it is not sex as such with which he is concerned, but human relations. His principal feeling is against the sin of using another human being for one's own ends, be they sexual, financial or social. He finds this the principal sin of the upper classes because aristocratic society has so separated itself from its humanity with artificial manners that it can enjoy using its considerable power over others in uninhibited evil.

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[55] Ibid., p. 208.

[56] Ibid., p. 217.

Fielding turns to religious institutions and philosophy, assaulting the inflexibility of both in the noteworthy debate between Square, the Platonic philosopher, and Thwackum, the enemy of all infidels and heretics and the defender of the Christian faith. If organized religion breeds the hypocrite in intellectual pursuit of absurd errors and damnable deceptions, philosophy does not seem sure of the answer either, as Square's pursuit of the good, the beautiful, the true, leads him only into the bed of Molly Seagrim.

Field here is satirizing the faults of man and the faults he incorporates into his institutions. He has looked at social custom and class mores to determine how they foster or discourage the necessary integration in society and in the individual. He concludes that neither order nor goodness can be achieved by man through neo-classic dependence on superimposed rules, any more than through Tom's kind of license. He shows in Thwackum and Square the unfortunate results of dependence on one kind of rule, and in Lady Bellaston and the other London figures, the outcome of dependence on another - a comment which must be balanced against the failure of Tom's attempts to depend on nature alone. These comments on morals and custom serve the double purpose of supporting the central statement on the nature of man in Tom Jones and of adding color and texture to a complicated plot.

We have said that Tom is Fielding's representative man, and we turn here to look at him as man. He seems to be made out of copybook maxims of Eighteenth Century Philosophy. Man, says the Enlightenment, is not naturally depraved; he is natively good and easily enlightened. He is generous, humane and tolerant by nature, and disposed to follow reason and common sense, and, as he is shaped by his environment, he is capable

of perfectability.[57] In every sentence, we recognize Tom - brought up by Mr. Allworthy in an environment of kindness and love where his instinctive goodness has been allowed to flourish. Reason and common sense merge with instinct, and natural man and rational man become one.

The combination of reason and instinct in less than perfect harmony is the problem Fielding sees in society. It creates in man the tendency to transfer intellectual questions into the realm of instinct, hopelessly blocking the recognition of good and evil, and blurring the differentiation between appearance and reality. Man sees sin in the appearance of evil as it is measured by society's standards, rather than in evil reality. Evil, in fact, is readily overlooked if it can masquerade under the appearance of good.

Richardson's view of the nature of man has led to the recognition of the same problem of evil, but Fielding, believing in human perfectability, is not led down Richardson's avenues of despair. He sees the answer in terms of sociological determinism, assuming that the essence of good precedes existence, and that favorable environmental conditioning can perfect man's nature. Fielding protests the naturalists' pessimism, presenting his argument in a dialogue that is, artistically, the least satisfactory section of the book. The episode of the old man of the hill, with its fairy tale atmosphere, contrasts unhappily with the realism of the other chapters and is not successfully incorporated into the action. But we cannot ignore it, simply because we do not like it.

The old man presents the view implicit in Richardson which rejects the world and the flesh in favor of the hereafter and the spirit, concentrating on the sinfulness of man's nature:

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[57]Carl Becker, The Heavenly City of the Philosophes (New Haven, 1959), Chapter III, "The New History."

> Man alone, the king of this globe, the last and greatest work of the Supreme Being below the sun - man alone hath basely dishonored his own nature; and by dishonesty, cruelty, ingratitude and treachery, hath called his Master's goodness in question, by puzzling us to account how a benevolent Being should form so foolish and so vile an animal. Yet this is the being from whose conversation you think, I suppose, that I have been unfortunately restrained, and without whose blessed society, life, in your opinion, must be tedious and insipid.[58]

This is the ascetic viewpoint which suggests that because man's nature is sinful, spiritual development is possible only in withdrawal from life. (We have seen the resulting death-in-life described in Clarissa and in the Gothic novels.) Fielding, seeing man's significance in the contributions he makes to man-in-society, rejects this position, though he does not deny the reality of evil. He does, however, protest a definition of man's nature which negates the idea of human goodness and the brotherhood of man:

> . . . you . . . here fall into an error which, in my little experience, I have observed to be a very common one, by taking the character of mankind from the worst and basest among them; whereas indeed, as an excellent writer observes, nothing should be esteemed as characteristical of a species, but what is to be found among the best and most perfect individuals of that species. If there were, indeed, much more wickedness in the world than there is, it would not prove such general assertions against human nature, since much of this arrives by mere accident, and many a man who commits evil is not totally bad or corrupt in his heart.[59]

Like the Philosophes, Fielding has abandoned the Christian concept of original sin in favor of the idea of human perfectability, and, as this passage indicates, refuses on principle to concentrate on man at his worst - reaching instead for a definition of his potential best. A whole

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[58]Fielding, pp. 172-173.

[59]Ibid., p. 173.

new pattern of thought on good and evil emerges with the ascendant-transcendant man. It is only through knowing what he may become, that man can hope to reach the perfection possible to his true nature.

With this new emphasis on good comes a shift in man's relationship to God. The Second Commandment takes precedence over the First, and man's salvation is an earthly deliverance dependent on the human heart related to mankind. Man assumes a new moral responsibility dependent on individualism submerged to the common good. Tom is Fielding's answer to the new demands of society; the hero Fielding creates has the necessary warm nature restrained by rational prudence; he combines the dignity of the spirit with the dignity of the flesh to form a genuine human dignity. In short, he is man at home with himself and at home with his world.

On the question of the nature of man, one can agree with Fielding up to a point. Man does have qualities of natural goodness, but an assessment of his nature which ignores instinctive evil may lead to questionable conclusions. Here the concept of wickedness arrived at by accident seems confusing. Fielding has described various kinds of vice, but one cannot say that Blifil's veniality, Thwackum's hypocrisy, or Lady Bellaston's seduction was arrived at by accident - and in Tom's unpremediated fights and infidelities, Fielding has made his major point in suggesting that these moral aberrations are not truly important corruptions because they do not touch the spirit of the man who is naturally good, and are, therefore, less than true wickedness. The idea of accidental evil seems to lose its direction when it ignores those vices Fielding has principally attacked - those involving the deliberate manipulation and prostitution of one human being by another for some kind of personal gain.

Though Fielding's idea of perfectable man and involuntary vice seems to us to distort his perception of good and evil, it does produce a new kind of heroic ideal who foreshadows modern man. The Age of Faith called man to greatness, the Age of Reason only to goodness. As Tom himself puts it, "the very best and truest honor . . . is goodness."[60] Paradoxically, man raised to the position of god - his humanity deified - is man reduced to insignificance. The horizons of the spirit are automatically narrowed as the microcosm supersedes the macrocosm in importance.

Tom Jones resembles The Odyssey in structure and theme, but departs from it in plot in one salient particular. Tom has been Telemachus in his search for an identity, and Ulysses in his search for prudence. Reason has been his Athene. Now, with his identity established and his maturity fixed, he settles into quiet country domesticity, apparently content. Odysseus, who like Tom has learned the lesson of restraint, establishes his position at home beyond question, but The Odyssey ends with the quest incomplete. Both father and son leave the satisfactions of home for lands so far from the sea that the inhabitants will not recognize an oar - new territory to an Achaean.

We feel that there is a real meaning in this difference which suggests a possible limitation in Fielding's point of view. His man seems too small, his quest too easily accomplished. When Tom settles down to the life of the country gentry, one recalls Alfred North Whitehead's warning, "When man ceases to wander, he will cease to ascend in the scale of being."[61] Man can never be good, we feel, and, without the challenge, can he ever be great?

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[60] Ibid., p. 275.

[61] Whitehead, p. 185.

CHAPTER V

THE NOVEL OF MANNERS AND THE SCHOOL OF FIELDING - PART I

Fielding is often credited with originating the novel, but it is surprisingly hard to say exactly what his real contribution to the field of fiction is. His work in Tom Jones is obviously experimental, combining the picaresque romance and the epic with history and drama in complicated confusion. His epic theory of plot construction has not given any permanent direction to novel form. His concept of function, however, is more enduring.

Fielding's influence seems to be in what Ian Watt calls "a responsible wisdom about human affairs"[62] which makes him see that the subject of the novel can be as wide as human society itself. The novels of the school of Richardson are vertical in concept, those which follow Fielding are horizontal, reaching out in all directions to look at life. Watt feels that Field's real gift to later novelists is a "stimulating wealth of suggestion and challenge on almost every topic of human interest,"[63] coupled with "a true grasp of human reality"[64] - an ideal offering for the novel of manners which is the early successor to Tom Jones.

The serious novel of manners is the novel of conscious social protest. It examines human life to identify social good and to find ways to eradicate social evil. Whatever the view of man's nature it expresses, its

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[62]Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (Berkeley, Calif., 1962), p. 288.

[63]Ibid., p. 288.

[64]Ibid., p. 288.

creation implies a certain amount of agreement with Fielding's affirmative admiration for human dignity, and his faith that self-knowledge has a positive value.

Tobias Smollett's last novel, Humphry Clinker, differs in many ways from Tom Jones but the two books have several qualities in common. They share a concern for man in his society, and both adopt the sociological point of view. Further, they both use the episodic plot and the quest theme, but so differently that a brief discussion of Humphry Clinker's structure - to show similarities and differences - may be helpful, particularly as what appear as similarities are often actually differences, and vice versa.

Smollett writes his book as a series of letters in the form popularized by Richardson, but Humphry Clinker does not include a whole view of a correspondence, as Smollett uses only the letters each of his principals writes to some particular friend. Instead of being reflections of internal reaction to an action, they only reveal external character through social comment on social custom and external actuality.

Like Tom Jones, Smollett's book has one central figure. Matthew Bramble is, like Tom, a representation of an ideal combination of human qualities of mind and heart, but the concept of the hero has undergone a substantial change. Mr. Bramble is an irascible, middle-aged hypochondriac, and the epic quest, on the surface, is a trip to various spas and resorts in search of relief from gastric distress. On a second level of interpretation, it becomes man's attempt to deal with the obvious imperfections of actuality and his search for meaning in a world of suffering and omnipresent evil.

Smollett weaves his two layers of expression into a whole, making an amusing comment on man's view of the world discolored by a disposition

sharpened by pain, and, at the same time using the metaphor of disease to represent moral and social evil. What appears at first to be superficial comment on the immediacy and mess of life becomes a statement of Smollett's view of reality.

The progress of Mr. Bramble and his party from place to place gives the book the episodic quality of Tom Jones - creating the same opportunity for inquiry into questions of class and condition, and for appropriate social comment. Fielding uses his canvas to reproduce an abstract of his age, out of which he draws his conclusions on the nature of man; Smollett does something quite different. His book begins where Fielding's leaves off, with man defined and the human condition outlined. His search is for spiritual survival in the face of actuality's malevolence.

Unrelated episodes support the early thesis, and a stream of minor characters is introduced to allow for digressive comments on a thousand aspects of life. Some are living people, commenting on real problems - defects in the parliamentary form of government, the corruption of the clergy, the position of the literary critic; others are satiric caricatures of some unattractive human trait with names like Frogmore or Bullford to suggest the bestiality Smollett sees in human nature.

The story which purports to be the plot - the love affair of Mr. Bramble's niece - has little to do with the book's real subject. The Puritan virgin has faded into insignificance as a background figure, and family relationships have lost their importance, because Smollett has subordinated both character and plot to militant didacticism. In spite of this handicap, he makes Mr. Bramble into a complex, three-dimensional character, described by his nephew, Jery, as:

> an odd kind of humorist, always so unpleasant in his manner that rather than be obliged to keep him company I'd resign all claim to the inheritance of his estate.[65]

But Jery is presently forced to qualify his statement:

> Indeed, his being tortured by the gout may have soured his temper, and perhaps I may like him better on further acquaintance; certain it is, all his servants and neighbors in the country are fond of him, even to a degree of enthusiam, the reason of which I cannot as yet comprehend.[66]

Mr. Bramble's first letter is revealing; it is a stinging complaint to his correspondent - his doctor, of course - including an exhaustive tabulation of his troubles, familial and physical, with cause and effect ironically indicated. Self-absorption gives way to concern for people, and the letter concludes with detailed directions for financial help he wants given to a recently widowed tenant. He emerges little by little as a man of great good will whose "blood rises at every instance of insolence and cruelty,"[67] and who is struggling to come to terms with life in a world in which both are commonplace.

We know enough of Mr. Bramble in these early pages of the book to value his opinions, and to see his travels in double perspective with both physical and philosophic content. Bath is "a rendezvous of the diseased" where old friends, all invalids, are gathered in considerable numbers, all attempting to prove to each other and to themselves that their lives are not petty and valueless and as ravaged as their bodies. We are reminded of "The Inferno" and the Circles of Fraud with "The running sore/ Of gangrened

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[65]Tobias Smollett, Humphry Clinker (New York, 1929), p. 5.

[66]Ibid., p. 5.

[67]Ibid., p. 77.

limbs, and putrefying stench" as long passages on "sweat, dirt, dandriff, discharges,"[68] and "the strainings of rotten bones and carcasses"[69] are interspersed with passages on moral decay. Physical disorder and social disorder become fused in our minds, and we see with Mr. Bramble a society "knowing no other criterion of greatness but the ostentation of wealth,"[70] whose characteristics are "ignorance, presumption, malice and brutality."[71] Both sexes, all classes, share these qualities, Mr. Bramble says, for

> . . . we are all a pack of venal and corrupted rascals; so lost to all sense of honesty and all tenderness of character, that, in a little time, I am fully persuaded nothing will be infamous but virtue and public spirit.[72]

When later, at Harrogate, he remarks that the mineral water "owes its reputation in a great measure to its being so strikingly offensive,"[73] we are ready to translate the remark from its satiric physical context into a comment on the attraction evil has for man.

With man and society thus darkly interpreted, the book turns to look at man's institutions. "The different departments of life are jumbled together,"[74] according to Mr. Bramble, and he goes through the book from this point picking out first one thread and then another, searching for the

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[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid., p. 51.

[70] Ibid., p. 39.

[71] Ibid., p. 40.

[72] Ibid., p. 89.

[73] Ibid., p. 195.

[74] Ibid., p. 103.

one "that will make him a part of the fabric of life,"[75] while he is looking for the prescription that will cure his physical symptoms.

A trip to London elicits a comparison between country and city[76] which is really a comparison between the integrity of nature and the iniquity of man. The first is "pure," "fragrant," "nourishing," "refreshing," while the second is "frowzy," "pernicious," "jaded," "defiled." Elsewhere, London is described as "this misshapen and monstrous capital, without head or tail, members or proportion,"[77] and its citizens are "this incongruous monster called the public."[78] Man's major institution, society itself, is a deformed dragon.

Comments on the workings of Parliament and on government in general show the same mistrust of the people, whose "influence is incompatable with excellence and subversive of order."[79] Mr. Bramble seems to agree with Thomas Hobbes that man makes life into something "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short," and that while man is man, a free press, the jury system, and representative government are all questionable institutions at best.

Smollett is close to the Philosophes in his feeling for the church and for religion. The clergymen at Bath are

> . . . great overgrown dignitaries and rectors with rubicund noses and gouty ancles, or broad bloated faces, dragging along great swag bellies, the emblems of sloth and indigestion.[80]

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[75]Mary B. Mullett, "The Ex-Story of Eugene O'Neill," in Toby Cole, ed., Playwrights on Playwriting (New York, 1960), p. 236.

[76]Smollett, pp. 140-145.

[77]Ibid., p. 106.

[78]Ibid., p. 114.

[79]Ibid., p. 137.

[80]Ibid., p. 84.

Christianity is dismissed with a Swiftian fillip by looking at it through aboriginal eyes. Savage Indians are so shocked by the idea of a god insulted, tortured, and executed that they condemn the missionaries to be burned at the stake, where they die "in a rapture of joy for the crown of martyrdom which they . . . thus obtained."[81]

The title figure, Humphry, is that favorite of Romanticism, natural man. He is a comic character who can geld horses, mend kettles, wrestle, dance, play the Jew's harp and hunt; he practices medicine on animals, and, by God's grace, ministers to the souls of men as an apostle of the evangelical movement. His genuine, if simple-minded, goodness is unnatural in artifical society, and he adds confusion to propriety and morality alike. In the role of minister, he upsets the relationship between social classes, and his honesty leads a court of law to the cynical conclusion that he must be a highwayman, as no decent man could be so convincingly sincere.

He may confound society, but he is no match for Tabitha Bramble. Her brother calls her ". . . that fantastical animal, my sister Tabby." and adds, "I almost think she's the devil incarnate come to torment me for my sins."[82] Smollett does seem to consider her the incarnation of evil in social disguise. "A violent churchwoman of the most intolerant zeal,"[83] she is attracted by the emotionalism of Methodism, and Humphry converts her in an episode which is satirically concluded with Humphry and Tabitha in a small boat on rough water, both expecting to drown. Jery, who is a member of the party, describes Humphry's typical behavior:

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[81] Ibid., p. 236.

[82] Ibid., p. 9.

[83] Ibid., p. 75.

> As he took it for granted that we should not be long for this world, he offered some spiritual consolation to Mrs. Tabitha, who rejected it with great disgust, bidding him keep his sermons for those who had leisure to hear such nonsense.[84]

And Humphry, the "surprising compound of genius and simplicity,"[85] proves as ineffectual in combatting evil with faith and love as the overweight clerics of the established church had been, or as the intelligent parsons of Scotland are able to be later. Good and evil and religion have little or nothing to do with one another, Smollett seems to feel, and the church, whatever its form, is only another social institution filling purely social needs - morally valueless.

The tone of the book changes as Mr. Bramble begins to recover from his more unpleasant ailments, and he confesses to Dr. Lewis,

> I have perceived that my opinion of mankind, like mercury in the thermometer, rises and falls according to the variations of the weather.[86]

There is, however, no discernible change in his real view of man. There is no unity between mind and spirit; man, "with sublime ideas in his head and nothing but illiberal sentiments in his heart,"[87] still makes up society, and only inexperience or ignorance can hide the fact that it is "those rotten parts of human nature which now appear so offensively to my observation"[88] which control him. Man is caught in a situation where he must control himself without the equipment for control.

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[84] Ibid., p. 277.

[85] Ibid., p. 223.

[86] Ibid., p. 90.

[87] Ibid., p. 125.

[88] Ibid., p. 126.

> The mind has a surprising faculty of accommodating and even attaching itself, in such a manner, by dint of use of things that are in their nature disagreeable and even pernicious.[89]

Man is unsupported and alone in a naturalistic world, faced with the paradox that he has no free will, but must act as though he did. The function of social institutions is only to protect him from himself - and so Mr. Bramble sees the charitable foundations and organizations he finds and approves of in Scotland.

Like the Twentieth Century existentialist, Mr. Bramble - who is Smollett - seeks purpose in purposelessness. His real interest is not immoral man - but moral man in immoral society. How can he best live out his time in a world where the central fact of life is evil, and where physical evil, moral evil and metaphysical evil all flourish? Smollett seems to agree with Leibnitz that metaphysical evil is the inherent problem, with man's extreme limitation his greatest handicap: his freedom to choose is his freedom to err. Physical evil and moral evil are constants; inescapable metaphysical evil reduces man to beast, and actuality to the fact of his gross physicality.

Smollett has evidently repudiated the dual dimension of actuality and reality in existence which Fielding feels so strongly. Without it, Smollett's kind of pessimism seems inevitable, though acceptance of the idea of God or of the good in the Platonic sense makes some kind of optimism possible even in the midst of evil, as Fielding has shown. It is interesting to look at Smollett and Fielding together just here, because, in spite of the polar opposition of their notions of man, they take the same subject - human nature - approach it from the same material viewpoint, and reach the same conclusion about man's place in society and about what society should be. It does not

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[89] Ibid., p. 414.

matter that for one, man is angel and for the other beast; each is restricted by the Eighteenth Century's circumscribed sense of the present to a definition of the good life as "the theory of true pleasure reduced to practice,"[90] a country life, a simple society, nature comfortably controlled by men, in fact reduced by their cooperative efforts to the formal shrubbery and the espaliered tree. The end of life is "to cultivate one's own garden," as Candide reminded Dr. Pangloss. Fielding, the optimist, seems to arrive at this contracted interpretation of being because he underestimates the problem of evil; Smollett, the pessimist, because he lets the idea of evil overwhelm him. Fielding looks for the ideal environment for perfectable man; Smollett seeks a hiding place for the beleaguered human spirit. Mr. Bramble, who speaks of greatness and public spirit, settles for goodness and private pleasure. He feels man's inhumanity to man so keenly that he sees the annihilation of the personality as the only possibility for the pessimist who lives in the world: "Any man's death diminishes me" and therefore I must not be involved in mankind.

Fielding and Smollett reach the same conclusion, we feel, because they both accept what appears to be a partial view of human nature. Do they not judge man from an incomplete, and therefore unrealistic, standpoint? They seem to see society with what Whitehead calls "the fallacy of misplaced concreteness," and reach a definition of the ideal which is so qualified that it seems to result in that victory of evil of which Edmund Burke is speaking when he says that all that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.

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[90] Ibid., p. 418.

CHAPTER VI

THE NOVEL OF MANNERS AND THE SCHOOL OF FIELDING - PART II

The novel of manners, of which Humphry Clinker is an embryonic example, rests on two sociological facts; first, that man is a social animal, and second, that human behavior shows regular and recurrent patterns. Sociology assumes that moral evil is a social variable, and that, as order is necessary to communal human life, it is important to examine an existing order to find ways to improve it. The new novel form is a natural vehicle for this kind of social analysis, and the Age of Reason, predisposed toward form and rule, is a natural time for it to appear.

Further, the novel of manners is a natural medium for the woman writer who now begins to emerge. As H. L. Menken observes, women

> . . . are better fitted for realistic representation than men - because they see the facts of life more sharply, and are less distracted by money dreams . . . . Their concern is always with things of more objective substance - roofs, meals, rent, clothes, the birth and upbringing of children.[91]

We are not surprised to find that, among the first examples of the novel of manners important enough to survive, several are by women.

Among these early women authors is Fanny Burney, who sets herself to a specified task in the preface to Evelina: "to draw characters from nature but not from life, and to mark the manners of the times."[92] Her

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[91]H. L. Mencken, Prejudices, Third Series (New York, 1922), "The Novel," p. 206.

[92]Fanny Burney, Evelina (Garden City, N. Y., no date), p. 9.

central figure is a young girl of seventeen brought up in a country parsonage. She is Richardson's heroine all over again - a beautiful blonde "with a virtuous mind, a cultivated understanding and a feeling heart."[93] She shares Clarissa's moral self-satisfaction and subjectivity, and is handicapped in much the same way by a preoccupation with salvation. Differences are more important than similarities, however. Miss Burney creates with her heroine an insoluble problem because Evelina is not very bright. Her comments on the fashionable world she sees with inexperienced eyes never penetrate below the surface of actuality. And by making her seventeen, Miss Burney involves herself in the complications of adolescent psychology; Evelina illustrates the typical exaggerated emphasis on self, and the maddening inability to see the ordinary ebb and flow of everyday life as anything but a series of personal crises.

In spite of these drawbacks, she is a useful character in a book which takes the feminine position, and confines itself to precise questions of social stratification within a single social order. Like Tom Jones, Evelina is outside the class system because of the circumstances of her birth, and the problems of the inconsequential plot concern the establishment of her social identity. Her wanderings are sociological journeys from class to class, which give Miss Burney a chance to look at several social groups and physical environments, out of which the book makes it comment on society and on man.

Miss Burney describes in detail the behavior of the upper classes of English society and of the lower middle class. She shows the pettiness of the status group which bases its judgments of personal worth on some

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[93] Ibid., p. 10.

form of ethnocentrism. Highly organized associational society tends to form itself into a series of insular groups, she feels, because man is a creature of patterned behavior who gains security from the familiar. As she puts it, man in society is "influenced by custom to forget the use of reason."[94] Everybody sees the superior value of his own custom, and looks on everybody else's as second-rate because it is different. Captain Mirvan sees inferiority in anything foreign; Mme. Duval repeatedly comments on the ill-breeding of the English; Mr. Branghton has only contempt for people who live outside the city.

The provincialism bred by this tendency toward group isolation is present in all classes, and class itself determines only its form. In the Branghtons' middle-class world, it appears as vulgarity which delights in the discomfiture of the outsider. In the upper classes, it reaches the proportions of viciousness. Captain Mirvan's treatment of Mme. Duval goes beyond the bounds of human decency and gets out of hand even as caricature, but the London aristocrats have more validity. Lovel, the fop, and Sir Clement, the beau, and the other young men of fashion who appear at Bristol as representatives of the evils of their class, all have something to say. They are not only contemptuous of any outside their own group, but have no feeling for each other. Like the London characters in Tom Jones, or Lady Griskin in Humphry Clinker, they have made manners the substitute for feeling, and passion for instinct.

One illustrative episode in which these people figure involves a race between two eighty-year-old women which has been arranged to settle a bet between two of the young men. Poverty has driven the old women into a degrading performance, and when one slips and falls,

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[94] Ibid., p. 319.

> a debate ensued; . . . the poor creature was too much hurt to move, and declared her utter inability to make another attempt. Mr. Coverley was quite brutal; he swore at her with unmanly rage and seemed scarce able to refrain even from striking her.
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> Lord Merton then, in great rapture, said it was a hollow thing; but Mr. Coverley contended that the fall was accidental and time should be allowed for the woman to recover. However, all the company being against him, he was pronounced the loser.[95]

The company which witnesses and tolerates this race includes not only the characters who represent the various facets of upper-class immorality, but all those who stand for excellence as well. Lord Orville, who is the ideal man in spite of his aristocratic background, puts his finger on the same problem that concerns Fielding and Smollett when he says,

> . . . certain it is, that the prevalence of fashion makes the greatest absurdities pass uncensured, and the mind naturally accomodates itself, even to the most ridiculous improprieties, if they occur frequently.[96]

Miss Burney may point to weak spots in the social system, but like other rationalists, she supports the idea of system. Evelina may flutter from group to group finding error everywhere, but she ends in the arms of Lord Orville. This is not snobbishness on the part of the author, we feel. It is simply that she sees the connection between class, status, and power.

The individual whose status makes him the "spirit upon whose weal depends and rests the lives of many" is naturally more important to society than one who is responsible for no one but himself. Miss Burney's point is that man is man whatever his class; his deficiencies are universal, and though their overt manifestations may differ by class, instinctive motivations are the same. By the same token, the ideal of the "virtuous mind,

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[95] Ibid., p. 338.

[96] Ibid., p. 319.

cultivated understanding, and feeling heart" may occur anywhere - in the ward of a country clergyman, the son of a lord, or the illegitimate child of a working-class woman - but its appearance in the upper reaches of the social structure is sociologically important because here it is allied with power and influence. Hence, the ideal human relationship is marriage between the ideal Evelina and the equally ideal and socially powerful Lord Orville. The social ideal at the top of the social order will create the best society possible to imperfect humanity.

Evelina is a good example of what is generally thought of as the novel of manners, but the book which takes an anthropological look at man and his folkways is also in the category. That the difference between the two is real and not rhetorical can be seen by looking at a book in the latter class, Castle Rackrent. Here, Maria Edgeworth attempts, through intelligent intuition, to do what today is accomplished by psychological anthropology - to account for national character. The novel gives a surprisingly graphic picture of the modern business man and the business ethic: - justice is the economic interest of the stronger. But its real subject is the Irishman. The conflict is not between man and man, but between man and himself. In the book, the estate - the land - is the great reality, but its owner does not see this clearly enough to form any kind of connection with it, and makes his ineffectual efforts at living in a spiritual vacuum. Actuality breaks in finally in the form of bankruptcy, and Sir Condy seems to be forced into a situation where he must face life, must learn something real - with all the distractions of immediacy abruptly cleared away. But nothing happens - nothing can happen, Miss Edgeworth suggests, because the real problem is not external in origin, but stems from some archetypal flaw within the Celt which creats a spiritual diffusion that separates him permanently from the outer world.

It is not the nature of man that interests Miss Edgeworth, but the nature of the Irishman. She shows him ironically in his futile strengths and hopeless weaknesses, but her satire is always gentle. She gives him a touching charm as well as a foolish courage and a genuine dignity in spite of his ridiculousness. Miss Edgeworth is not Irish herself, but in her strong sense of commitment to Ireland and its people, we feel something of the understanding which later makes Yeats the spokesman for Ireland - and her disoriented man becomes, in Yeats' hands, one of the great symbolic representations of modern man.

Castle Rackrent and Evelina represent transitional stages in the development of the satiric novel of manners which comes into full being when Jane Austen combines the established conventions with the skill of the artist.

For Miss Austen, as for Fielding, two things are important - society and morality; the problem in life, and in the novel, is to reconcile the two. Society is not some vague and spontaneous human grouping, but an integrated organization made up of a complex array of roles and statuses, relating the behavior of individuals to one another.

In Mansfield Park, she turns to the institution of the family to observe its functions in the rearing of children. She accepts the prevailing social order of her time - the hierarchial structure of the family - but she looks at the familiar parent-child relationship in a new way, aware of the complementary importance of the roles. Every status has both rights and obligations, and within the family, the rights of the parent become the reciprocal obligations of the child. In the ideal situation within Miss Austen's hierarchy, the two generations - each conscious of its own rights and duties - both contribute to the general pattern of harmony, and thus to the development of proper moral sensibility in the children.

Though she writes in the early Nineteenth Century, Miss Austen is too much a product of Eighteenth Century formality to see much virtue in untutored natural man. She recognizes natural instinctive goodness as the important spiritual quality, however, and considers it the true morality separating the civilized from the savage. The first concern of the family is to nurture and develop it by proper upbringing of the young.

Three families produce the young people who are the main characters in Mansfield Park, and who are thrown together there as young adults, ready to get on with the social business of marrying and producing new families to maintain the continuum of society. They are all the products of their very different backgrounds, and the conflicts among them grow out of their variant attitudes toward life and their dissimilar value standards.

We shall look at each of these groups in turn to see what Miss Austen shows us of its particular effectiveness in creating the morality she approves. First in importance and complexity is the household at Mansfield Park itself, with Sir Thomas Bertram at its head. Miss Austen treats Sir Thomas seriously throughout the book, never subjecting him to the subtle ironies she employs with most of her characters. He is in many ways the standard - the good man who accepts his responsibilities - but he is a human being, and he makes serious mistakes. As head of the household, Sir Thomas has the right to dictate to all its members; he superintends the details of their lives, and it is their obligation to obey him. "It is the duty of a wife," Miss Austen observes, "to adopt the opinions of the man she loves as her own."[97] His children owe him unqestioning obedience. Sir Thomas puts it more strongly: "Independence of spirit . . . in young

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97Jane Austen, The Complete Novels (New York, 1933), p. 693.

women is offensive and disgusting beyond all common offenses."[98] The father's unequivocal right to command has its corollary obligation, however: it is Sir Thomas' responsibility to serve as a model of sensibility and deportment for his family, and to provide the best possible education of mind and heart for the young people in his charge.

Miss Austen's people are real and their problems are real; and though Mansfield Park represents perfection, it is human perfection, therefore limited and flawed. The illusion of reality necessarily implies the presence of evil, and at Mansfield Park, evil enters the idyll in the person of Mrs. Norris, who bursts into existence on the first page of the book with her characteristic

> . . . spirit of activity, which could not be satisfied till she had written a long and angry letter to Fanny, to point out the folly of her conduct, and threaten her with all its possible ill consequences.[99]

She is a comic character who embodies the human failures, large and small. Through her, we see how small foibles control human action. For example, Mrs. Norris dislikes Fanny, and mistreats her, because she has always neglected the child; she encourages the affair between Maria and Mr. Rushworth, which she instinctively feels to be a mistake, simply because she thought of it in the first place. Larger vices of pride in social position and avaricious respect for wealth make her spoil the Bertram children, who have money and position, while ignoring Fanny, who has neither.

Here Miss Austen makes an important point. The four young Bertrams all make an excellent impression as they are growing up, in spite of Mrs. Norris' indulgences. They are attractive and polite. They all seem cultivated and appreciative, and there is no discernible difference between

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[98] Ibid., p. 662.

[99] Ibid., p. 469.

Edmund and the other three. Outwardly, their training appears to be entirely satisfactory. Miss Austen, like Fielding, points to the danger of mistaking the actual for the real. As the book progresses, she suggests that the wrong education is more dangerous than none, for three of the Bertrams have acquired the manners and polish which deceptively cover the moral weakness which is the reality underneath.

Mrs. Norris, who has humored them and flattered them, represents the influence of a superficial society whose ideals are materialistic, but the final responsibility for his children's faulty characters must rest with Sir Thomas himself. He has made the initial error in judgment which, in spite of good intentions, ruins the lives of two of them, and nearly kills a third. He has lacked the instinct to realize the depth of Mrs. Norris' influence, and the failure costs him both his daughters. Further, he lets material concerns, symbolized by a business trip to Jamaica, take precedence over his parental obligation. Had he been at home to serve as a physical model of propriety, he could have protected his family against the invasion of damaging moral influences from outside.

The study of the Bertram family gives us an estimate of middle-class family structure with its best features considered and the variety of its weaknesses suggested. Even the exemplary Sir Thomas shows imperfect human judgment and shows himself subject to the insidious influence of middle-class materialism. Miss Austen is a realist; she knows that no system devised by man will be ideal, but some are clearly better than others. She chooses Sir Thomas and the hierarchial family to show what she considers best, and to point out the errors this particular system tends to foster, so that man, knowing himself, can be on proper guard.

The Crawford household we know only by hearsay and by the results it has produced in Mary and Henry Crawford. We are told enough of it, however, to be able to reconstruct it, and to contrast it effectively with the society at Mansfield Park. The elder Crawfords are members of the same corrupt city upper class already observed by Fielding and the others. Miss Austen adds her own criticism when she notes that the important internal family structure is faulty. Neither the Admiral nor Mrs. Crawford accepts his assigned place in the social scheme; Mrs. Crawford, who hates her husband, refuses to acquiesce to his wishes; and the Admiral evades his paternal responsibilities to his wards. In fact, Mary Crawford, in giving him a word of approval, "Few fathers would have let me have my way half so much,"[100] condemns both him and herself.

The younger members of this unstable household are unprepared to withstand exposure to the immorality of the aristocracy; Mary absorbs its mercenary materialism, and Henry its sensual decadence. Yet in these two, Miss Austen shows her belief that instinctive goodness is a natural human quality. Damaged though they are, the two young Crawfords are not entirely callous, and both are strongly attracted to the good represented by Edmund Bertram and Fanny Price. Indeed, the latter part of the book takes on the dramatic quality of a medieval morality play as the forces of darkness war with the forces of light for the souls of the Crawfords. Evil wins, but such is Miss Austen's technical skill that the complexity of motivation and human action which combine to bring about the conquest suggests that slightly different circumstances might have thrown the victory to the other side.

The last important household in the book is the Prices' Portsmouth establishment, where cramped quarters, quarreling children, and poor

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[100] Ibid., p. 649.

servants create an atmosphere which at first we mistake for another kind of evil. Again the hierarchial structure has broken down; Mr. Price is a kind, but unimpressive, man who has no control over his family, as his wife has none over her household. The surface disorder is appalling, but Miss Austen uses this unpromising group to reinforce her protest against the materialistic value standard she considers the principle danger to middle-class order. London society, she says, depends on materialism and is doomed; even the ideal goodness of Mansfield Park is endangered by too much comfort. Now she shows that even unpropitious Portsmouth influences can be effectively counterbalanced by the accidental discipline of poverty. "The advantages of early hardships . . . and the consciousness of being born to struggle and endure"[101] result in the "general well-being and success"[102] of Fanny, Susan, and William, and "the other members of the family, all assisting to advance each other"[103] in the correct Austen family spirit.

The products of these three environments come together at Mansfield Park where the question of ideal morality is studied. The family creates the self, and we know that Miss Austen looks at the family to measure the degree of natural feeling its training develops in the individual. Proper influences within the family provide the moral strength which protects man against his real enemy - the system which distorts feeling into something pernicious and dangerous because it is unreal. In the book, the symbol for this kind of destructive artificiality is the play which the young Bertrams and their guests plan to produce at Mansfield Park.

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[101] Ibid., p. 759.

[102] Ibid., p. 759.

[103] Ibid., p. 759

Changing mores have destroyed the usefulness of the symbol, and today the surface objections to acting as "the end of all privacy and propriety"[104] are entirely meaningless. But, though we cannot really accept the play as an emblem of evil, we can see intellectually the use Miss Austen is making of it. We can see that the idea for the production is initiated by those in whom not only manner, but mind itself, is tainted by artificiality, and we see the contamination spread until selfishness dulls all sympathy, with ". . . everybody requiring something they had not, and giving occasion of discontent to the others."[105] The "dangerous intimacy"[106] encourages uncontrolled passion which ends in ruined lives and family disgrace. Edmund, the good, is led by the play into a violation of his strongest principles, and even Fanny is unable to find the courage to face the united disapproval of the cast and only escapes involvement by the introduction of a deus ex machina. The faces of sin masked by artificiality are many and varied, for where feeling is lacking or perverted, man creates all kinds of moral evil which spread undetected under a bright surface to trap the unwary and the innocent. The feeling of the Mansfield Park characters is gauged by their understanding of this fact. Maria and Julia do not understand, do not learn, and are punished; Tom is taught by suffering; Edmund and Fanny have known all along - Edmund taught by religion and Fanny by denial. The Crawfords are so far from grace that they never realize that there is a lesson to be learned. Even when the evils symbolized by the play have spelled themselves out in the action, both Mary and Henry continue to look back on the rehearsals with joy, and we know

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[104] Ibid., p. 562.

[105] Ibid., p. 561.

[106] Ibid., p. 752.

that they are both past hope. Though the good struggle for them, and their own good instincts fight to be free, they are lost, and withdraw into the city life Fielding equates with Hell.

When the book ends, those who are educable have gained "the most valuable knowledge: knowledge of themselves and of their duty."[107] Sir Thomas' lesson is spelled out in some detail because his position of responsibility makes him important. He has always known his duty; now he knows himself as well, seeing his unconscious materialism as the cause of the misjudgments which have ruined his children. Miss Austen has rewarded him with Tom's rehabilitation and Edmund's success; now he finds in Fanny the daughter he has always wanted. As for Fanny and Edmund, they have married, fortified with the necessary knowledge of themselves and of the world, to make Mansfield Park as nearly perfect as Sir Thomas intended it to be.

Miss Austen agrees with Fielding and Smollett on the nature of the ideal human society, though her definition of man falls somewhere between theirs. She sees the same conflict between the real and the actual that troubles Fielding, and accepts the dualism of mind and heart, but she dismisses reason as valueless in a creature in whom it can be almost instantly subverted by feeling. Through its own defective mechanism - rationalization - reason can defend any action, good or bad, at feeling's dictation. Feeling, then, is the key to man's nature.

The individual with too little feeling can be neither merciful nor just, she says; he who has too much is without the discipline of self-control and will turn instinct into animal passion. (We recognize Julia in the

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[107] Ibid., p. 750.

first description and Maria in the second.) The necessity is "proper control of inclinations and tempers - instilled by sense of duty and nothing else."[108] The path of neo-classic moderation and the path of duty coincide.

Feeling, which is man's natural goodness, will be impaired by every blemish in society. Therefore, Miss Austen says, it is man's obligation to himself to look for that society in which feeling will be most freely developed. Man, as a social animal, must live in society, and to be man, he must accept his personal responsibility for his kind, and accept the fact that rights are inevitably paired with obligations. By his very nature he is involved in mankind, but he is armed with free will - he is free to accept his responsibility to know himself and his duty. His freedom is "freedom to" - not "freedom from" as Smollett suggests. He is imperfect and fallible, but it is his duty to act as though he were perfectable. His greatness is his innate goodness, and "Know thyself" is the human challenge: The greater his self-knowledge, the greater the degree to which he can develop instinctive goodness, and the more nearly will good transcend evil in the world. For Miss Austen, the final decision rests with man - he is free to choose.

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[108] Ibid., p. 703.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

It is probably obvious that the two currents of thought which have been discussed in this essay are discernible in any period of modern history, with either the romantic or the classic rising to dominance in response to a given combination of historical, philosophic, and artistic circumstances. We make the point, however, because what interests us about the two as they appear in the Eighteenth Century novel is not their obvious difference, but the latent resemblance we notice, in which, we feel, is their larger meaning.

To clarify this statement, let us go back for a moment to E. M. Forster and the problem of the artist. Forster is right, we believe, to be afraid of the reader who repudiates art, literature, and music, and calls for a novel that is only entertainment. Today, the artist who acknowledges an obligation to this kind of audience soon finds himself deprived of all artistic credentials, catering to the lowest common denominator of public taste - as the wasteland of American television so clearly illustrates. Yet the early novelist managed to write for his middle-class reader with a definite sense of moral obligation to him, and still produce original, lasting work. What is more, it was popular work, with the literary work of art and the best seller indivisible.

Perhaps this was a lucky accident, dependent on the climate of the time. Author and audience, as we know, belonged pretty much to the same class, living in a cultural setting in which there was a general agreement

on what the world was like. Writer and reader tacitly approved of each other, sharing the same values, and understanding each other because there existed a kind of social unity which has no modern counterpart. By contrast, the artist of today finds himself out of contact with the public, and even the literate layman is constantly on the defensive in an increasingly technical atmosphere. (Of the two cultures into which C. P. Snow divides our world, the scientific has gained almost complete ascendancy.)

The unity which the Eighteenth Century enjoyed was not synonymous with conformity - rather the opposite, as it is a sense of disunity which creates the need for the barren security of sameness. The Eighteenth Century artist was self-confidently at home in a familiar world whose unity was the catalyst which freed him to create, and allowed for endless idiosyncratic variation within the formal structural pattern of society. Hence we find no inconsistency in presenting both Richardson and Fielding (and we would like to have included the marvellously individualistic Sterne) as representative of the middle-class point of view - at the very moment we are categorizing them to emphasize the dissimilarities of the tone and atmosphere of their novels.

The sense of unity between man and man, implying intellectual agreement on a superficial world view, had something to do with making the Eighteenth Century novel possible, we feel, as it gave the middle class the only creative freedom it has ever had, but our investigation of the novel suggests that perhaps the real force behind it was something deeper - a subconscious artistic understanding that the unity on which society depended had lost its real foundation. These novels imply that under surface agreement there were new undercurrents of protest and unbelief, and we make the tentative suggestion that the novel is an expression of these inarticulate

thoughts, and that it is specifically an attempt to identify man's place, and his true relationship to God, to man, and to himself, in the menacing insecurity of a disintegrating world.

Richardson and the Puritans concentrate on the relationship of man to God, and we have already noted the simultaneous, dual-level approval and disapproval of the nature of the relationship which is characteristic of the whole school. Richardson particularly shows that Puritanism's effort to bind man more closely to God has led to the destruction of the God of Love - and His replacement with the withdrawn God of Creation and a fragmentary God of Salvation. Worship of this divided diety isolates man from his fellow man in fear and judgment, and as Richardson, Walpole, and Lewis have all shown, has led him to psychological separation from himself.

Fielding and the novelists of manners base their work on the fact of social order in a harmonious universe. They are not plagued by the Puritan separation from actuality, and they can come to grips with human suffering and understand the dual demands of mind and heart on the human personality. They seem to reach back in time toward the medieval ideal of "the attainment of a harmony of the understanding,"[109] but the idea of the ordered universe is under fire in the Eighteenth Century, and man has already lost his wider view of himself as the "finite between the two infinities," as Seventeenth Century Pascal sees it, "the mean between nothing and everything." As a result, we feel, the Eighteenth Century protest against cruelty and injustice has been reduced to the personal and private disapproval of man who is dispossessed of his necessary sense of continuity with the universe.

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[109] Whitehead, p. 73.

The Eighteenth Century novelists, with their varied views of the nature of man, are individual and original, but what we have taken to be their basic differences, seem, on closer examination, to be reflections of different facets of the same disorientation. In their inward concern for it, we detect a marked underlying similarity in their work, for all its surface variation. It incorporates for us a kind of double truth, and, as "the production of a work of art throws a light upon the mystery of humanity,"[110] their work shows us the life of their own time, and in its "inward thoughts," it shows us, darkly, dimly, the beginning of the reality of our own.

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[110]Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature," in Norman Foerster, ed., American Prose and Poetry (Cambridge, Mass.), p. 469.

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